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GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CHARGE CARD AND TRAVEL ADVANCES

I. Purpose

This directive establishes the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy for the Government travel charge card and travel advances.

II. Scope

This directive applies to all DHS organizational elements serviced by the DHS Office of the Chief Financial Officer. All organizational elements that receive travel card support from another agency or that have existing programs, should continue to use those procedures until a DHS-wide system is developed and implemented.

III. Authorities

This directive is governed by numerous Public Laws and national policy, such as:

- A. Title 41 Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 301.
- B. Travel and Transportation Reform Act of 1998, Public Law 105-264, 112 stat. 2350, dated October 19, 1998.
- C. Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, Public Law 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321, dated April 26, 1996.
- D. GSA SmartPay contract.

IV. Definitions

- A. **Travel Card**: A contractor-issued Government charge card for use by DHS employees authorized to travel. The term excludes personal credit cards issued to employees based upon their own financial merit by credit card companies.

- B. **Contractor**: A vendor selected by DHS from the GSA master SmartPay contract. The contractor provides individually billed travel card services, ATM and related services and bills the cardholder directly for the charges. Cardholders will pay the vendor directly for the amount billed by the payment due date.
- C. **Official Travel**: Federal government travel authorized by agency-issued travel orders.
- D. **Government-issued Travel Advance**: An advance, for the purpose of performing official travel, made by electronic funds transfer to an employee who does not possess a travel card.
- E. **Automated Teller Machine Advance**: A cash withdrawal obtained by an employee using their travel card.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The **Under Secretary for Management** shall be responsible for all aspects of this directive.
- B. The **Chief Financial Officer (CFO)** shall:
 - 1. Monitor the activities of all DHS organizational elements serviced by the DHS Office of the Chief Financial Officer to ensure compliance with this directive.
 - 2. Appoint an Agency Program Coordinator (APC) who will serve as the liaison to the contractor and GSA, with the assistance of the Contracting Officer, on issues dealing with the program.
 - 3. Establish procedures with internal controls for effective and efficient use of the card.

- C. The **Chief Human Capital Officer** shall:

Establish procedures and guidelines, outlining appropriate disciplinary action, for mis-use/abuse and non-timely payment of travel card invoices by employees.

- D. The **Agency Program Coordinator** shall:
 - 1. Monitor the overall charge card program for the CFO.
 - 2. Serve as the liaison to the contractor and GSA, with assistance of the Contracting Officer, on issues dealing with the program.

3. Reviews all applications for travel cards for accuracy and necessary approvals. Forwards applications for issuance of card to the USCG travel card unit for processing.

E. **Employees** shall:

1. Complete an application for a travel card. DHS employees who travel on official business at least twice a year can apply for a travel card. An Acceptance Statement, signed by the employee, must accompany an application for the travel card. Completed applications are forwarded to the immediate supervisor for approval.

2. Use the card only for official authorized travel expenses incurred while on official travel. Possession of the card does not exempt the employee from using Government contract carriers when required. Use of the card does not relieve the employee of the responsibility to employ prudent travel practices and to observe rules and regulations governing travel as set forth in the FTR and DHS travel policy.

3. Pay the contractor directly in full by the payment due date on the invoice or dispute incorrect charges in accordance with the Cardholder Agreement. Repay travel advances if a trip is cancelled.

4. Comply with this directive, terms and conditions of the Cardholder Agreement, and be familiar with the Travel Cardholder Guide provided by the contractor.

5. Submit travel claims for reimbursement within 5 workdays of completion of travel or every two weeks when on extended travel.

6. Notify the contractor in a timely manner when a change of name, address, office location, or other significant change occurs.

7. Return the card to the Chief Financial Officer staff when it is no longer required to fulfill the mission of DHS, upon retirement, resignation, or transferring to another agency.

F. **Managers** shall:

1. Determine which employees in their organization need a card.

2. Approve and forward Employee Card Applications to the APC.

VI. Policy and Procedures

A. **Policy**. The U.S. Coast Guard will perform travel card services for DHS organizational elements serviced by the DHS Office of the Chief Financial Officer. A travel card will be issued to DHS organizational elements serviced by the DHS Office of the Chief Financial Officer employees who will travel two or more times in a year. A Travel Card Application must be completed, with supervisor approval, to receive a travel card. The travel card will be issued with a monthly spending limit of \$2,500 and ATM access. Increases must be requested and justified. Employees may only use the card for authorized expenses incurred in connection with official travel. Employees issued a travel card are not authorized to charge the cost of common carrier transportation to the DHS centrally billed account or be issued cash advances. Employees issued a travel card shall use the ATM access for travel advances. Employees who have not been issued a travel card may request a travel advance. The travel advance will be processed and electronic funds transfer payment made via the Department of the Treasury. A request for a cash travel advance must be submitted at least 5 workdays prior to departure on travel.

The following policies will apply to use of the travel card:

1. Use of the contractor-issued Government travel card is required for all official travel expenses in accordance with P.L. 105-264, dated October 19, 1998. Employees shall use the card to purchase common carrier transportation. Employees shall make every attempt to find a place of accommodation that accepts the travel card and complies with the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act.
2. The charge card will be used whenever possible for meals, car rentals, and other reimbursable miscellaneous expenses (taxi, parking, etc.) An ATM travel advance may be used to cover authorized expenses where the travel card is not accepted. An ATM travel advance is usually limited to the amount authorized for Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per travel day, depending on the temporary duty location, and may not exceed \$400 per week.
3. Use of the card for unauthorized expenses or for official authorized expenses of an employee other than the cardholder is prohibited. Family member use is prohibited.
4. Cardholders must use prudent travel practices and observe the rules and regulations governing official travel as set forth in the FTR.

5. Employees are responsible for preparing and submitting proper travel vouchers within 5 working days after completion of travel. For extended travel situations, proper travel vouchers should be prepared and submitted bi-weekly. DHS will reimburse the cardholder for official authorized travel expenses based on submission of a travel claim (SF1012 or equivalent) for reimbursement signed by an authorized Approving Official. Electronic funds transfer will be the payment method. Employees are responsible for payment of the card invoice directly to the contractor. Payment shall be made in full by the due date. The contractor may suspend/cancel the card for non-timely payment. Employees are reminded that timely payment of card invoices is still required even if reimbursement has not been received.

B. ***Procedures:*** The DHS Travel Technician in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer will provide employees an Application for a Travel Card and a Cardholder Acceptance Statement, upon request. Both forms must be completed by the employee, signed by the employee's manager, and returned to the DHS Travel Technician. Card applications will not be processed without both forms being completed, signed by the employee's manager and returned to the DHS Travel Technician. The normal issuance time for a travel card is approximately 2 weeks. Expedited processing is available, upon request.

C. ***Questions or Concerns Regarding the Process:*** Any questions or concerns regarding this directive should be addressed to the Office of the Under Secretary for Management.