

# Pay and Personnel Center Travel eNewsletter/Frequently Asked Questions – Updated October 2020

## 2020 Transfer Season was a bit crazy, but we are on the downswing!

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## Greetings AOs

What a crazy year. Or has it been a week? I've totally lost track to be honest. It has been like a bad infomercial. But wait! There's more!

You guys are killing/killed it and I say that knowing what you had to deal with this year. Covid entitlements, making sure we stay within the JTR, then toss in the VPC issues, oh, and not to mention the Float Plan (which should not be included as documentation in your PCS TVL Claim).

I'd like to give a quick shout out to YN3 Theiss, YN3 Bistrimovich, YN3 De Leon, YN2 Gaskins, YN2 Jones, YN2 Simmons, YN2 Bond, YN2 Constantin, YN1 Willis, YN1 Curtain, YNC Monroe, and YNCS Scott. These superstars ensured TVL was a well-oiled machine before they left. The new crew has hit the ground running. They worked hard during this season to ensure our shipmates were reimbursed in a timely manner. I see great things coming!

The whole Coast Guard (CG) is in for some changes and PPC Travel is here to help. As some of you know, the CG has received two mandates from DHS that will impact travel in the future; a new financial system and a new travel system. We are at the beginning of the process and PPC Travel is heavily involved to ensure we make it as easy as possible for everyone. This new system is an online system, where all travel arrangements, claim submissions, and payments will be housed. It will, in short, ensure funds are obligated prior to travel. We are working on process that will work in all situations. A concern that continues to surface is that if an AO approves something that is not authorized, PPC will kick it back; this is not the case. The AO is the authorizing authority and has the responsibility to ensure all approved travel vouchers adhere to the JTR/FTR/SUP JTR and laws. PPC Travel and external audits do not view all claims, we spot check, identify trends and attempt to resolve these trends by providing correct information and updating our guides.

I am mentioning the below again to reduce the number of questions PPC and CG-1332 receive.

### **Process for contacting PPC Travel:**

If you are having issues with the Electronic Travel System (T-Pax) and have researched the guides, **please have your AO submit a Customer Care Ticket with your question and the research you and your AO have done.** It will help us understand what the issue is and help us provide the proper assistance to you and your AO.

### **Policy determination:**

If you are unsure of something in the JTR/FTR/SUP and you need a policy determination, send the determination request to CG-1332 (HQS-DG-LST-CG-1332-TRAVEL). Understand that just sending in a question is not sufficient; you will need to provide the reference along with your interpretation of the policy, and then ask your question. CG-1332 has stated that a number of questions they receive from the field could have easily been answered by communicating up the chain, utilizing their YN network, or a quick search in the JTR/SUP, so please do your due diligence and use your resources prior to reaching out.

***CWO3 MATTHEW FALOR***

***Motto: Ensuring our people stay grounded to the deck plate our shipmates stand upon.***

## **Manual Claim Submissions**

No more paper claims. DHS Financial Management Policy Manual, chapter 7: "Employees will be

reimbursed for authorized, official travel expenses incurred while on travel by filing a travel voucher through their Component's on-line voucher processing system.” Accordingly, Command Approving Officials will no longer be able to send paper claims to PPC. PPC will accept paper claims for separations, retirements, Invitational and dependent medical travel only.

Travelers that cannot access T-Pax will need to set up a full signature proxy for their claims. This designates a person at the unit that can input these claims for the traveler and then route it to the AO for submission. This will decrease the time in reimbursement, and remove another layer of possible mistakes.

To set up a Full Signature Proxy the traveler must log into TPAX and navigate to their profile. My Profile & Trips > View my TPAX Profile > T-PAX Info > Then click to select Sig and select the person to be their Full Signature Proxy.

For Auxiliary members (or members without access to the Coast Guard network), here is the link with instructions on setting up a Full Signature Proxy. This is in Chapter 2.K of the Personnel & Pay Procedures Manual, PPCINST M1000.2 (series) <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/ppc/pd/3pm/>

If you have issues or problems, please have your AO submit a Customer Care Ticket via PPC’s website <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/ppc/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

### **Required Documentation, who’s responsible?**

Per National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), General Records Schedule 6, item 1a, the traveler is required to maintain complete and accurate records of all travel claims for 6 years and 3 Months. Per Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series), General Records Schedule 9, the unit controlling the authorization of travel must maintain copies of records relating to reimbursement, such as travel orders, per diem vouchers, and all supporting documents relating to official travel. These official travel records shall be maintained for a period of six years.

So, what does this mean? The retention for the Traveler is easy, 6 years and 3 months.

For the “Unit Controlling the Authorization” issue. As the AO authorized by the commanding officer, you retain all documentation for travel claims approved electronic or paper for 6 years. This would include dependents of service members and civilians.

### **Traveler Roles and Responsibilities**

Travelers will work directly with their AOs to complete claims, resolve errors, and obtain information regarding claim status, audits, supplemental claims, travel policy, or requests for explanation of travel payments. This will provide the most rapid resolution of members travel issues, improve AO/traveler communications and efficiency, and reduce overall claim processing and reimbursement times. Travelers enter and submit travel vouchers directly into WEBTPAX, in accordance with JTR/SUP, JTR, and FTR. In all cases, travelers, AO, and the unit must keep all travel documents for time specified above in Required Documentation.

### **AO Roles and Responsibilities**

In accordance with JTR/SUP, JTR,FTR/DHS, FMPM, and Life Cycle Manual, AOs are required to

review all supporting documentation; including but not limited to orders, all amendments, and all required receipts of advances or settlement requests. They are also responsible for ensuring all entitlements are accurate, proper and legal entitlements prior to approval of claims. AOs authorize travel, approve expenses, and forward electronic vouchers to PPC in accordance with current policy and procedures. The AO must ensure that all required documents are attached, valid, and readable within WEBTPAX.

## External Audits

Travel claims are audited by CG-85, KPMG, and multiple entities within the Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security. PPC is the conduit between these auditors and the AOs. If an auditor identifies a claim for review, they reach out to PPC for clarification or supporting documentation. PPC then reaches out to the AO and Traveler for supporting documentation. If documentation cannot be produced, it may be determined that the traveler was reimbursed improperly. A debt may be built or it could be sent to the AO's command for action per Coast Guard Supplement to the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR/SUP). Each command is responsible to administer, manage, control, and account for travel and transportation funds in accordance with current directives. Policy guidance is provided to mitigate unnecessary travel, prevent the misuse or abuse of travel advance and GTCC privileges, instruct members concerning prudent and reasonable travel expenses, ensure travel vouchers are promptly and accurately liquidated, and to initiate appropriate action when fraud or abuse is suspected or determined to have occurred. In addition, CGS-JTR states the Coast Guard Pay and Personnel Center (CG PPC (TVL)) is responsible for: Referring vouchers suspected of containing fraud to the traveler's commanding officer or the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS).

There are many reports that are run from other entities, for example, DHS runs two reports from ADTRAV and GTCC and matches up the amounts.

## PPC Customer Care

**PPC Customer Care** will continue to field emergency calls related to travel advances, debt collection overpayments, and other miscellaneous travel related emergencies, these inquiries may be directed to PPC Customer Care Branch (CCB) at 785-339-2200/toll free 1-866-772-8724, via e-mail to [ppc-dg-customer@uscg.mil](mailto:ppc-dg-customer@uscg.mil), or by completing the web form at <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/ppc/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

**Note: All the traveler/AO inquiries should be submitted in accordance with ALCGPSC 033/17.**

## Why haven't I been paid?

There are a few reasons why your traveler may have not received their reimbursement yet. Annually FINCEN puts out an ALCGFINANCE FY## FINCEN SYSTEM USER AVAILABILITY SCHEDULE message that identifies the days that FINCEN does not process payments.

So if you see your claim has been completed in T-Pax, but you have not seen payment, before reaching out to PPC, check the dates on the message.

If it has been 10 days since "completed" in T-Pax, the best course of action is to reach out to FINCEN at (757) 523-6940. Please understand you must tell FINCEN when PPC completed the claim (give the completed date in T-PAX) DDMMMYYYY and they should take for action.

**If the claim is in a completed status, there is nothing that PPC can do as it is in FINCEN's control.**

### **Why didn't the Advance pay out?**

It's that time of the year again when our ability to pay advances is contingent on the passage of a Continuing Resolutions or budget for FY21.

We understand this can cause frustrations, and unfortunately it is on congress to pass the budget and/or laws to ensure we don't have a lapse in appropriations.

### **Notes are now printed on the notification e-mail**

We have turned on the remarks to be added to the canned e-mail to the Traveler and AO when it is released to FINCEN for reimbursement.

With this comes a learning curve.

These will be the remarks input in T-Pax from the Traveler, the AO and PPC.

This is being done so the AO and Traveler can see the remarks without logging into T-Pax.

This will increase the transparency of the claims process and reveal reasons why some claims take longer than others to complete.

As an example, when PPC hears from a command that wants to know why a claim is taking so long, we walk them through T-Pax and investigate it with them. I reference the notes that identify that the claim was first returned for lack of orders, second for lack of an Amendment, and the third time we received the claim, we pay what we can and list in the remarks what we didn't pay due to lack of documentation or unauthorized (JTR) entitlement. We are changing our process to remove entitlements that do not have justification/documentation with the first submission so the member can at least pay their GTCC. They will have to do a supplemental with the required documentation.

When turning on these comments, it will show all remarks which could cause some confusion. I.E. if it's a good claim, the remarks may make them think there was another issue. 99% of the time it will be no action required.

If this comes up, please research the claim with the traveler and if there is an issue that cannot be resolved with a supplemental, please ensure the AO submits a customer care ticket.

### **T-Pax profile builds**

As an update, new cyber security changes caused the profiles from Direct Access that are sent/received from T-Pax to create new accounts had to be updated. It has been about 5 months to get this resolved and our superstars on the systems team have gone above and beyond. It has been resolved and reports are now able to transfer as before.

### **Process Changes**

For years PPC has had processes in place to validate the claims coming from AOs and double check the work that they are performing. This has lengthened processing time.

In an effort to reduce turnaround times we are changing our process to complete more post payment audits rather than double checking the AOs work before payments are made.

What does this mean for you? If the AO does not do their due diligence when auditing and authorizing a travel claim then you could have travelers coming back to ask why they have a travel debt.

### **How do I say “That is not authorized?”**

Have you had someone that outranks you tell you they are correct and you are wrong about a travel claim? Or have you had someone tell you that you are going to give them an amendment even though you do not believe it is appropriate? Do you wonder what to do or are you curious where you can go if this happens?

Remember, you are the Approving Official and your Commanding Officer has given you their “by direction” authority; it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure travelers are traveling within the law/regulations.

If you feel a traveler is requesting something that is not authorized, it is your responsibility to research and explain this to the traveler; in some cases you may learn you were wrong and they were right.

Here is my suggestion for a “best practice.”

Have the member e-mail you exactly what they want to do and tell them you will research it and get back to them; this will start documentation. If they refuse to e-mail you, then e-mail them spelling out the question as you understand it and telling them you are looking into it.

If they are correct, you will have this documentation for future reference. If you have done your research and cannot find a way to yes or to authorize what they are requesting then you may need to reach out for help. Also, remember what the JTR says 010103 B. “Items Not Mentioned”. If something is not stated in the JTR, it does not mean that an allowance exists or may be authorized. The philosophy of “It doesn’t say I can’t; therefore, I can” does not apply to the JTR. Instead, if the JTR does not say something *can* be reimbursed, then it *cannot* be reimbursed as a travel claim.”

So, what happens if this goes south? Well, I hope this doesn’t happen, but this is what your Chief, CWO and/or Chain of command is for. If you are uneasy about reaching out to them, then you can submit a Customer Care ticket with the question (remember to put the references as to why you are reaching out) and PPC will respond. This should never be your first course of action; a Customer Care Ticket should be your last resort. You can put in the ticket that you are being pressured and you feel this isn’t authorized and we will help as best we can. I require all documentation and references you have found, and who you have spoken with. I.E. CG-1332, your Chief, your CWO, your Silver/Gold Badge - I will take it from there.