

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 1-208

JUNE 19, 2007

**Administration and Management
Delegation of Authority, NWSPD 1-2**

**DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY FOR FOOD/LODGING EXPENDITURES
IN ADVANCE OF OR DURING MAJOR WEATHER EMERGENCIES OR DISASTERS**

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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Type of Issuance: Emergency

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 1-208, “Delegation of Authority for Food/Lodging Expenditures,” dated September 2, 2003. Changes are: (1) The title was amended to specify that the expenditures are in advance of or during major weather emergencies or disasters to differentiate from the Department of Commerce policy on food expenditures at conferences; (2) “Office of Primary Responsibility” and “Certified by” was changed from Management and Organization Division (CFO3) to Comptroller Division (CFO2); (3) An additional paragraph was added in section 1 referencing expressed limited exception to Department policy; (4) Additional wording was added to sections 3.1 and 3.2; (5) Two additional paragraphs were added in section 3 that elaborate on permissible expenditures using appropriated funds and expenditures that are employees’ responsibility as specified in NOAA Acquisition Alert 06-06 (copy attached); and (6) Accounting for such expenditures was moved to CFO2 in section 4.

Signed by _____

June 5, 2007

Robert J. Byrd
Chief Financial Officer/Chief
Administrative Officer

_____ Date

Delegation of Authority for Food/Lodging Expenditures In Advance of or During Major Weather Emergencies or Disasters

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1. Introduction. The Department of Commerce Office of General Counsel rendered a legal opinion dated January 18, 2002, concluding the National Weather Service (NWS) has authority, under limited circumstances, to use appropriated funds to purchase food and/or lodging for employees who must remain at their official duty stations during major weather emergency or disaster situations.

General Counsel’s opinion supersedes a 1999 Decision Memorandum by Joseph T. Smith, Management and Organization Branch, NWS, which found the NWS Director did not have authority to purchase food or lodging for employees during major weather emergencies or disasters.

This policy provides for a limited exception to Department policy on the use of appropriated funds for food. (See Department Administrative Order 203-10, “Official Entertainment and Representation Authorizations.”)

2. NWS Delegation of Authority. NWS Financial Management Centers (FMCs) may authorize an exception to the general rule against purchasing food and/or lodging for employees under the limited circumstances outlined in NWS policy guidance, dated March 2002, and as described below. This authority may be re-delegated to facility heads (e.g., meteorologists-in-charge, hydrologists-in-charge) within each organization.

3. NWS Policy Guidance for the Expenditure of Food, Lodging, and Advance Purchase of Emergency Supplies During Weather Emergencies or Disasters.

3.1 Major Weather Emergencies or Disasters. The provision of food and lodging may be authorized by an FMC upon making all of the following determinations:

- a. To carry out the NWS's critical responsibilities to forecast weather and issue storm warnings, it is necessary to staff an office throughout an emergency;
- b. The emergency involves danger to human life or the possibility of destruction of Federal property; and
- c. To staff an office, it is necessary to provide meals and lodging to employees who must work during the emergency.

For example, where weather conditions are of such an extreme and unusual nature as to prevent employees from leaving an office, and the office must be staffed on a 24-hour basis during an emergency involving danger to human life and Federal property, NWS appropriated funds may be used to provide food and lodging to the affected employees. The duration of time for which appropriated funds can be used in these situations will be determined by the Regional Director.

3.2 Advance Purchases for Emergency Preparedness. Whether food and supplies may be purchased in advance and stored on site depends upon whether an FMC determines such expenditure is a necessary expense. For example, under Executive Order 12656, NWS is required to "...be prepared to respond adequately to all national security emergencies, including those that are international in scope, and those that may occur in any region of the Nation." This may include making provision to staff an office throughout an emergency to provide necessary meteorological information. The advance purchase and storage of food and other supplies (including cots/blankets) may be appropriate to ensure employees who must work throughout the emergency will remain at their duty stations. The decision to expend funds to purchase food and supplies in advance should be made for each NWS office depending upon the particular circumstances of the office, such as its size and location in a remote area. During a prolonged emergency event, such as a landfalling hurricane, employees should make every effort to secure their own food and lodging once conditions permit.

3.3 Permissible Purchases of Emergency Supplies. Based on opinions issued by the Comptroller General that permit the expenditure of funds for lodging by securing hotel accommodations during emergency situations, the purchase of beds, mattresses, bed linens, pillows, washcloths, and towels is acceptable. Kitchen supplies such as paper and plastic ware, cooking utensils, dish detergent, and paper towels are also permissible. The tangible items become government property. Purchases of office supplies (chairs, cell

phone protective cases, and stamps) and cleaning products (antibacterial wipes, hand soap, and bleach) are allowable.

3.4 Expenditures that Remain Employees' Responsibility. The purchase of laundry products (e.g., detergent, dryer sheets) and personal care items (e.g., shampoo, deodorant, shaving cream) are the employees' responsibility; appropriated funds may not be used for such expenditures.

4. Accountability and Reporting of Expenditures. Each FMC is accountable for its usage of these expenditures and reports annually (by October 31 for previous fiscal year) to the Comptroller Division on Food, Lodging, and Advance Purchase Expenses.