



Office of Government-wide Policy  
March 8, 2021

Federal Travel Regulation  
GSA Bulletin FTR 21-04

TO: Heads of Federal Agencies

SUBJECT: Relocation Allowances – Waiver of certain Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) provisions during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

1. What is the purpose of this bulletin? This bulletin informs agencies that certain provisions of the FTR governing official relocation travel and renewal agreement travel (RAT) may continue to be temporarily waived for individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This bulletin rescinds GSA Bulletins FTR 20-06 (85 FR 23029 April 24, 2020) and FTR 21-02 (85 FR 59311 September 21, 2020), which were both set to expire on March 13, 2021, and re-establishes the information therein by issuance of this new FTR bulletin with a later expiration date.

2. What is the background of this bulletin? Federal agencies authorize relocation entitlements to those individuals listed at FTR §302-1.1 and those assigned under the Government Employees Training Act (GETA) (5 U.S.C. Chapter 41).

As a result of the Presidential national emergency proclamation issued March 13, 2020 concerning COVID-19, GSA allowed agencies to determine whether to implement waivers of time limits established by the FTR for completion of all aspects of relocation, temporary storage of household goods (HHG) shipments, house hunting trips (HHT), and time remaining in a second tour of duty upon return from RAT, as set forth in FTR Bulletins 20-06 and 21-02.

The COVID-19 outbreak has continued to produce uncertainty and create difficulties for individuals attempting to complete their relocation within one year or complete their RAT entitlements. For example, added restrictions are delaying employees' HHG shipments, which may mean they require more days of temporary storage than are permitted in the FTR. Employees are also having difficulties finding a suitable permanent residence and completing real estate selling/purchasing transactions because of state and local COVID restrictions. In addition, employees on HHT or RAT are encountering last minute airline flight cancellations due to the volatility of the airline industry, various travel advisories issued by U.S. agencies and foreign countries, and required COVID testing.

Therefore, each agency may determine whether to apply the waivers set forth in this bulletin to employees' relocation travel impacted by COVID-19. However, agencies are

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reminded that official domestic and international travel should be limited to only mission critical trips.

3. What FTR provisions are addressed by this bulletin?

a. Completion of Relocation. Per FTR §302-2.9, employees must complete all aspects of their relocation within one year from the effective date of their transfer or appointment unless an employee (i) is furloughed to perform active military duty (§302-2.10), (ii) cannot travel and/or transport HHG due to shipping restrictions to or from a post of duty outside the continental United States (OCONUS) (§302-2.11), or (iii) for reasons beyond a current employee's control and acceptable to the agency, additional time is needed to complete real estate selling/purchasing transactions (§302-11.22).

b. HHG Temporary Storage. Per FTR §302-7.9, for continental United States (CONUS) to CONUS shipments, the initial period of temporary storage of HHG at Government expense may not exceed 60 days. The agency may authorize up to an additional 90 days for CONUS to CONUS temporary storage, not to exceed a total of 150 days. For HHG shipments with an OCONUS origin or destination, the initial period of HHG temporary storage at Government expense may not exceed 90 days. The agency may authorize up to an additional 90 days for OCONUS origin/destination temporary storage, not to exceed 180 days.

c. HHT. Per FTR §302-5.11, an employee may be authorized a roundtrip HHT by their agency to seek permanent residence prior to reporting at the new official station. The HHT should be for a reasonable period, not to exceed 10 calendar days.

d. RAT. Per FTR §302-2.14, individuals relocating at Government expense must sign a service agreement stating that the individual agrees to serve for a minimum time period after they have relocated. Once an employee has completed their initial tour of duty, an agency may offer RAT for the employee to serve a new tour of duty at the same or different OCONUS location, if the employee meets the conditions under FTR §302-3.212. RAT is intended to provide expenses of round-trip travel and transportation for the employee and their family members to their CONUS actual residence or other approved location in the U.S. for the purpose of taking leave between successive tours of duty and prior to the new tour of duty (FTR §302-3.211). An employee cannot accrue the RAT entitlement from one period of service to another if not used.

4. What waivers may my agency apply to the FTR provisions addressed by this bulletin?

If relocation travel during COVID-19 cannot be delayed, then agencies may apply the following waivers up to the duration of this bulletin:

a. Completion of Relocation. The requirement in §§302-2.9 and 302-2.110 to complete all aspects of relocation within one year may be waived.

b. HHG Temporary Storage. The maximum temporary storage periods in FTR

§302-7.9 (150 days for CONUS-to-CONUS or 180 days for OCONUS relocations) may be waived for those employees relocating who have experienced unforeseen circumstances beyond their control resulting from COVID-19. Agencies will consider the merits of individual requests on a case-by-case basis.

c. HHT. Agencies may allow additional travel days beyond the 10-day limit in FTR §302-5.11 if airline flights are delayed, cancelled, or changed for reasons beyond the employee's control. Employees should alert their supervisor and work with their travel management center to schedule travel on the next available return flight that meets FTR limitations regarding air travel. Agencies will consider employees' requests on a case-by-case basis.

d. RAT. Agencies may waive FTR §§302-2.14(d) and 302-3.505(d), meaning that RAT travelers are not required to have 12 months of service remaining on their second overseas tour of duty after taking RAT, in order to be eligible for RAT. This waiver does not impact the length of an employee's service agreement with their agency. For example, the employee still must 1) have satisfactorily completed their initial tour of duty and 2) complete the agreed upon period of service under their new service agreement for entitlement to RAT. An employee who fails to complete the minimum period of service under their new service agreement for reasons that are not acceptable to the agency must pay the Government all transportation and per diem expenses the employee and their immediate family received for RAT as specified in FTR §§302-3.223 and 302-3.224.

5. What is the effective date of this bulletin? This bulletin is retroactively effective for official relocation travel performed after March 13, 2019, one year prior to the date of the Presidential national emergency proclamation concerning COVID-19.

6. When does this bulletin expire? This bulletin, and the waiver authority granted to agencies herein, will expire December 31, 2021, unless further extended or rescinded by this office.

7. Whom should I contact for further information or clarification? Mr. Rick Miller, Senior Policy Analyst, Office of Government-wide Policy (OGP), Office of Asset and Transportation Management, at [travelpolicy@gsa.gov](mailto:travelpolicy@gsa.gov). Please cite GSA Bulletin FTR 21-04.

By delegation of the Administrator of General Services,

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