

Chapter 9 – Meals, Lodging, and Travel

PURPOSE

This chapter provides guidance for securing meals and lodging while on Division of Forestry (DOF) assignments within the State, as well as rules and guidelines for travel outside the State.

REFERENCES

The Department of Administration (DOA) travel and moving policy and procedures manual is located at <http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/manuals/aam/resource/60t.pdf>

Per diem rates in the Lower 48 -located at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

Agency-provided subsistence is the default method for providing meals and lodging for personnel on DOF incident assignments. Resources with agency provided credit cards, deemed self-sufficient should utilize their credit cards for pre-approved lodging and per diem.

SOLICITATION FOR MEALS AND LODGING

Prior to the fire season, and periodically if needed, each Area Office shall contact local vendors soliciting meal and lodging services for incident personnel. Fairbanks and Palmer vendors are solicited by the appropriate Regional Office. Area Admins have access to updated Meal and Lodging Packets. Offers are requested from as many potential vendors as possible to assure equal opportunity. Each interested vendor completes the appropriate Vendor Information Packet and returns it to the Area Office. Each Area Office compiles a list of restaurant, grocery and hotel vendors who have responded. The Area Office provides copies of signed Meal and Lodging offers to their Dispatch Center.

[Meal Vendor Complete Packet](#)

[Lodging Vendor Complete Packet](#)

MEALS

For guidance on claiming per diem, see the TRAVEL section later in this chapter. The State of Alaska will subsist incident staff in most cases. Personnel assigned to fire support activities at their established duty stations are responsible for providing their own meals. In extreme circumstances, the Area Forester/FMO or equivalent may authorize written exceptions.

Types of meal subsistence for Resource Ordered personnel away from their duty:

- Meal Coupons
- Sack Lunches
- Contract Meals
- Meals in the McGrath Dining Hall
- Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's)
- Fresh Food Boxes
- Catered Meal

Meal Periods are as follows:

MEAL	FROM		TO
Breakfast	0001	to	1000
Lunch	1001	to	1500
Dinner	1501	to	2400

MEAL COUPONS

[Meal Coupons](#) - Form 1- Is an option for personnel not assigned to a specific incident, (such as Preposition orders) and not subsisted another way. Meal coupons may also be an option for drivers who are picking up/dropping off Resource Ordered personnel (also Sack Lunches). **Meal coupons should be used rarely; other means of subsistence should be considered first.**

Resource-Ordered incident personnel and drivers are eligible when they are away from their normal duty station for more than three consecutive hours during the established meal periods.

Meal coupons are a numbered, secured, warehouse-cataloged stores item. Coupons are ordered as a supply item on a Resource Order. Area and Regional offices are responsible for keeping meal coupons and the “dollar amount” stamp used in a secure location.

Only those with delegated authority from the Regional Admin Officer or Area Admins will issue and approve meal coupons. When meal coupons are issued, an entry is made on the [Meal Coupon Log](#) - Form 2. Due to the changing nature of assignments, personnel should check in each day to receive sufficient meal coupons for meals through the following breakfast (unless they know they will be leaving sooner). A checklist for using [Meal Coupons](#) - Form 1 should be given to the recipient.

At participating vendor establishments, if the meal selected exceeds the established meal rate, the individual using the meal coupon is responsible for paying the difference directly to the vendor.

At participating vendor establishments if the meal selected is lower than the established rate, no change is due to the individual.

Rates for Meal Coupons

\$12.00	Breakfast
\$16.00	Lunch
\$32.00	Dinner

COMPLETING MEAL COUPONS

- Meal coupons are issued and signed by authorized personnel.
- Dollar amounts are stamped on the face of the coupon.
- The appropriate meal dollar amount is circled.
- Cross out the other meal dollar amounts with an X.
- The date of use, user’s name, charge code/fire number, incident number and request/tail number are entered in the appropriate fields.
- The information from the coupon is entered in the [Meal Coupon Log](#) - Form 2.

RULES FOR USING MEAL COUPONS FOR RESOURCED-ORDERED INCIDENT PERSONNEL

- Used only on date authorized on the meal coupon.
- Redeemable only at participating vendors.
- Issued for one meal.
- Issued for one user.
- Must be used in the DOF Area where issued.
- Cannot be used in the employee’s home unit.
- Cannot be used for non-food items, taxes, gratuities, alcoholic beverages.
- Any exceptions must be approved by the Area/Regional Forester.

Vendors must provide the DOF with:

- Original [Meal Coupons](#) - Form 1.
- Invoice or [Forestry Meal Program Billing Form](#) - Form 4.

SACK LUNCHES

Sack lunches are provided in fire camps for the noon meal and are an option for providing meals to crews and other personnel who are traveling.

Sack lunch requirements are outlined in the [Meal Vendor Complete Packet](#) sent to vendors soliciting their participation. Sack lunches are requested on a Resource Order as a supply item. Vendors are paid a standard rate of \$16.00 for each sack lunch provided.

Vendors must provide the DOF with

- Invoice or [Forestry Meal Program Billing Form](#) - Form 4
- Resource Order

CONTRACT MEALS

Contract meals are sometimes provided as an alternative to per diem or catered meals and may be delivered to fire camps or provided in restaurants.

Contract meals are paid at the standard rate of \$12.00 for breakfast, \$16.00 for lunch and \$32.00 for dinner. Contract meals may include buffet service, limited or regular restaurant menu items or specific meals for groups at an agreed upon rate. Contract meals are requested on a Resource Order as a “Service” supply item.

Vendors must provide the DOF with

- Invoice or [Forestry Meal Program Billing Form](#) - Form 4.
- [Dining Sign-In Sheet](#) - Form 5.....*OR*
- List of Names with Resource Order number and function code.....*OR*
- Crew manifest with Resource Order number and function code.

MEALS IN MCGRATH DINING HALL

Personnel staged at the McGrath DOF station are provided meals in the station Dining Hall. At each meal, personnel provide their name and incident#. Personnel whose Home Unit is McGrath will reimburse the State for meals eaten by payroll deduction.

MEALS READY TO EAT (MRE’s)

MRE’s are generally provided for the first three days of an incident. After that, another type of subsistence such as fresh food boxes or catered meals is generally provided, although under certain circumstances MRE’s may still be necessary.

FRESH FOOD BOXES

When it is determined that an incident will extend past three days, the incident may order fresh food boxes on a Supply Resource Order. Cook kits and coolers should be ordered with the first fresh food order. Subsequently ordered personnel may need to eat MRE’s until such time an additional fresh food box order is placed and received. Fresh food box orders must be made 48 hours prior to desired delivery.

There are two types of fresh food boxes:

1. Box A - Should be ordered initially and supplies two people for three days.
2. Box B - Supplies four people for three days and contains fewer condiments (supplies from Box A should carry over).

Typically, orders for Box A and Box B alternate but depending on use can be adjusted. Contents and pricing may be obtained from the State Fire Warehouse.

CATERED INCIDENT MEALS

Once incident personnel numbers reach 150 and are expected to remain at that level or higher for three days or more, the State may choose to contract with a Mobile Food Service Unit to provide hot meals at the incident at rates in accordance with the individual contract.

LODGING

Personnel may be required to:

- Camp on-site at an incident (default if assigned to a specific incident).
- Stay in field quarters.
- Stay in provided facilities.

Resources should expect to pay for their own lodging in hotels and include those charges with their travel documentation. However, locally designated personnel in Dispatch or Admin may make reservations at local lodging vendors to hold a room. Lodging vendors participating in the Forestry Lodging Program will be used whenever possible. When lodging is procured, an entry is made on the [Lodging Log](#) - Form 6.

The lodging invoice must contain the following:

- Guest's name.
- Hotel address and phone number.
- Check-in and check-out dates.
- Total amount due.

Amounts in excess of the agreed-upon room rate such as for phone calls, movies, room service or tips must be paid directly to the vendor by the employee. Reimbursement for work-related charges can be claimed on a [Fire Trip Details Closure Form](#) - Form 3. The original invoice should be paid using the traveler's PCard or personal credit card if they do not have a PCard. The invoice is to be submitted with the [Fire Trip Details Closure Form](#) - Form 3. In the event the traveler is unable to pay for the lodging, they should contact their home unit for arrangements. If the invoice is sent to the ordering Area or Regional office, it may be forwarded to the traveler's home unit for processing (for SOA employees). Invoices for non-SOA employees may be processed by the ordering unit if not paid by the traveler. Required documentation on the lodging invoice includes at least one of the following:

- The Resource Order number and function code.
- Aircraft tail number.
- An explanation of who/what the invoice is for (e.g., Regional staff attending fire in-briefing or closeout).

TRAVEL

Emergency Firefighters (EFF) must be provided a completed EFF [Single Resource Hiring Information Form](#) - Form 7 for each assignment prior to departure; this is to be given to Check-In and Finance on the Incident.

Travel for Resource-Ordered personnel is handled by the appropriate dispatch office (or their designee). The individual's dispatch office (for mobilization) and the dispatch office handling the incident (for demobilization) coordinate travel details (i.e., meals, lodging, transportation, etc.). The traveler should confirm that their home unit has received their demobilization information and confirm travel arrangements from the nearest jetport to the home unit.

Approval for a rental vehicle, cell phone or other job-specific equipment, if required for the position ordered, must be documented on the Resource Order. Approval on a Resource Order is assumed to refer to government issued equipment.

Vehicle transport may utilize various contracts, i.e. Forestry Master Agreements (MA) or National Emergency Rental Vehicles [NERV website](#). or use of a Personal Ordered Vehicle (POV). Rental under the NERV program must meet specific criteria and be specifically authorized on the Resource Order. Even if specifically authorized but NERV criteria do not apply, the NERV program should not be used. POV use must be pre-approved by the Incident Commander (IC) or Area Forester of the Receiving Unit for transport to/from in-State incidents, or by the Sending Unit Area Forester, or equivalent when travel is needed to/from airports for out-of-State assignments. The Resource Order should document who approved a POV. See Chapter 6 for more information on rental vehicles.

Additional rental car insurance coverage should not be purchased if rental was initiated by individual's dispatch office. The cost will not be reimbursed to the employee. Individuals will not be reimbursed for rental vehicles if they elect to obtain a rental vehicle that is not authorized on their Resource Order.

Rental vehicle use is authorized for work purposes only. Other arrangements must be made for days off. Rental Vehicle Guidelines can be obtained through the Area Dispatch Office.

No travel advances will be allowed when agency-provided subsistence is available. Reimbursement is not allowed for those portions of any assignment when the agency subsists incident personnel and/or the employee elects to obtain their own meals and/or lodging.

On Resource Ordered assignments (except for in-State Preposition), it is understood that subsistence is provided by the Incident and that per diem is normally reserved for travel to and from incidents and on authorized days off. On Preposition assignments away from the normal duty station, per diem must be approved by the requesting office Area Forester, FMO or equivalent and documented on either the Resource Order or other written documentation .

Certain personnel, generally those not assigned to a specific incident such as Dispatchers and Aviation resources, may not be subsisted and may be on per diem for the duration of the assignment. Some positions are requested to be self-sufficient on the Resource Order and personnel must then be able to pay for travel costs except for airfare. Travel costs paid by the traveler are claimed for reimbursement on a [Fire Trip-Details Closure Form](#) - Form 3. The Home Unit Admin will submit the travel documentation for reimbursement.

On the days of departure and return, the traveler receives 75% of the applicable per diem rate. The per diem rate is based on where the employee spends the night except for the last day of travel. On the last day of travel, the per diem rate is based on where the traveler woke up that morning.

Excess baggage fees should be avoided as much as possible by making use of the Club 49 (Alaska Airlines) or similar programs. The State does not pay for airline seat upgrades.

Travel Deviations are the exception from direct returns after release from an assignment and require pre-approval from the employee's Area Forester/FMO/equivalent prior to approval by the Incident. Any additional expense associated with travel interruption or deviation from provided travel, including compensation for travel time for employee convenience, will be borne by the employee. The employee must return their rental car, if applicable, and arrange their own ground transportation.

UPON RETURN FROM ASSIGNMENT

- Contact home unit immediately.
- Have travel CTR/OF-288 closed out by Dispatch or Admin.
- Turn in OF-288 to Admin.
- Fill out the [Fire Trip Details Closure Form](#) - Form 3 and submit all travel documentation within five days of return including:
 - a) Original lodging receipts (if lodging is not provided by the requesting agency). If lodging not paid by government credit card, receipt must show last four digits of traveler's credit card number so payment by traveler can be verified.
 - b) Boarding passes (if change from original itinerary), travel itineraries/receipts, extra baggage fee, etc., including return travel itinerary.
 - c) Record of departures and arrivals by nearest town to the incident during travel.
 - d) Travel times, route changes, locations and timing during travel, mode of transportation.
 - e) Time accounting records, including documentation of mandatory day off.
 - f) Signed original receipts for all expenses (taxi, fuel, lodging, rental car, etc.)
 - g) Fire name on each receipt.
 - h) Meals not subsisted.
 - i) Resource Order.
 - j) Explain extenuating circumstances and travel delays/deviations.