

ATTACHMENT:

USAID POLICY ON BUSINESS CLASS AIR TRAVEL

- A. The United States Government and the United States Agency for International Development require that employees who use commercial air carriers for domestic and international travel on official business use *coach-class* airline accommodations, including contract or city pair fares if available and cost advantageous to the Agency.
- B. The Federal Travel Regulations (FTR), [41 C.F.R. Part 301-10.124](#), provide certain *limited* exceptions to the above rule when specifically justified and authorized by the Agency. It is the policy of the Agency to limit justification, authorization, and payment of these transportation expenses that result in the greatest advantage to the Government and to ensure that travel is by the most expeditious means practicable. This section defines the limited exceptions and sets forth the justification and approval process.
- C. The provisions of this section apply only to business class travel accommodations. First class travel is approved only under special circumstances and must be approved, in advance by the Deputy Administrator with Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) clearance. A justification for first class travel must be in writing and must set forth in detail a rationale, consistent with [41 C.F.R. Part 301-10.124](#).
- D. There is no entitlement to business class travel accommodation for overseas trips in excess of 14 hours. Business class travel may be authorized when the origin and/or destination of the trip is outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) and the scheduled flight time, including scheduled stops in transit, is in excess of 14 hours, the traveler foregoes the available rest stop, and the traveler reports to work the day after arriving at post. Therefore, if approved, the traveler will not be eligible for a rest stop en route or a rest period upon arrival at the duty site. The determination as to whether an employee shall travel business class or shall be scheduled for a rest stop is a decision to be made by the employee's supervisor, the designated Office of Administrative Services, Travel and Transportation Division (M/AS/TT) official or Executive Officer (EXO) of the funding office. In making these decisions, the responsible officers are expected to keep in mind the limited availability of funds and the fact that least cost options generally favor rest stops. These decisions, will not in any case, be based on a traveler's grade or position. However, the nature of a traveler's pending duties may be a relevant factor. If business class travel accommodation is approved, the rationale must be authorized, justified, and documented on the travel authorization (TA).

E. The limited exceptions to the business class travel rule are specified below. A request for business class accommodations under any of these circumstances must be accompanied by a (1) *full written justification, setting forth in detail why the provision applies to a particular situation, and (2) addressing all aspects of the provision.* Approval may be granted upon the request meeting these specific requirements listed below. However, approval is not guaranteed. The justification must be cleared by the office(s) described in each provision. Blanket justifications covering classes of employees or recurring circumstances are not permitted unless the traveler has a certification of disability. Requests must be fully justified and approved prior to the issuance of the travel authorization. Business class travel may be approved under any of the following circumstances:

1. Regularly scheduled flights between origin/destination points (including connecting points) provide only business class travel accommodations. In this situation, you must describe the required routing and why no alternative using coach class accommodation is available. The justification must be cleared by M/AS/TT (when funded in Washington) or by the EXO or designated official (when funded outside Washington). Additionally, you must certify as to the unavailability of coach class accommodations on your voucher.
2. No space is available in coach-class accommodations in time to accomplish the mission, which is urgent and cannot be postponed. In this situation, you must describe the required routing and why no alternative using coach class accommodation is available. You must set forth in detail why the mission is urgent and cannot be postponed. The request with justification must be cleared by your immediate supervisor (as to the immediacy and urgency of the mission) and M/AS/TT (when funded in Washington) or by the EXO or designated official (when funded outside Washington).
3. Business class travel is necessary to accommodate your disability or other special physical need.
 - a. “Disability” is defined as a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of a person’s major life activities. Requests for business class travel based on disability must be accompanied by a doctor’s certification and will be treated as requests for reasonable accommodation pursuant to [ADS 110.3.6](#) and processed accordingly. This certification must be re-authorized annually, or upon request, unless the disability is determined to be a lifelong condition.
 - b. “Special physical need” includes physical conditions that do not rise to the level of a disability. A request under this provision must be substantiated in writing in detail and must include current

medical certification provided by a competent medical authority which addresses the specific reason business class travel accommodation is necessary. (However, medical documentation is not required when the physical need is a lifelong condition.) A justification under this provision must be cleared by the DAEO, in consultation with the M/AS/TT (when funded in Washington), or by the Mission Director (when funded outside Washington).

4. Security purposes make the use of business class travel accommodations essential to the successful performance of the Agency's Mission. A justification under this provision must state why security concerns make business class travel accommodations essential, and must be cleared by the Office of Security (when funded in Washington) or by the Mission Director, in consultation with the Regional Security Officer (RSO) (when funded outside Washington).
 5. The use of business class travel accommodation results in an overall cost savings to the Government by avoiding additional subsistence costs, overtime, or the loss of productive time while awaiting coach-class accommodations. A written justification under this provision must contain a detailed cost analysis, and must be cleared by M/AS/TT (when funded in Washington) or by the Mission Director (when funded outside Washington).
 6. When required because of the Agency's Mission. A justification for business class travel accommodation under this provision must fully describe the mission requirements and why other alternatives that would allow the use of coach class accommodations are not sufficient. In no case may these decisions be based on a traveler's grade or position. However, the nature of a traveler's pending duties may be a relevant factor. A justification under this provision must be cleared by the DAEO, in consultation with the M/AS/TT (when funded in Washington), or by the Mission Director (when funded outside Washington).
- F. Travelers are authorized a rest period not to exceed 24 hours at either an intermediate point or at the destination point if all of the following conditions apply:
- Either the origin or destination point is OCONUS.
 - The schedule flight time, including stopovers, exceeds 14 hours.
 - Travel is by a direct or usually traveled route.
 - Travel is by less than business class travel accommodation.

When a rest stop is authorized, the applicable per diem rate is calculated at the rate for that location [FTR Section 301-11.20](#).

It is the Agency's policy to provide as full a rest stop as airline schedules permit and as close to the full 24 hour rule as possible. In those cases where the next available flight after an adequate rest period is beyond the 24 hour maximum period, additional time may be allowed for awaiting onward transportation. Additionally, expenses will be reimbursed for that rest stop location when such accommodation is required.

- G. These provisions do not apply when transportation costs are paid in full through Agency acceptance of payment from a non-federal source in accordance with [41 C.F.R. Part 304-1](#). In those cases, the procedures set forth in [ADS 522.5.20](#) shall apply.
- H. These provisions do not apply when the traveler pays for an upgrade at personal expense, uses a personal frequent flyer account for a class upgrade, or when an upgrade is provided as a promotional item with no cost to the Agency. When an upgrade is provided as a promotional item, the traveler should verify with General Council, Ethics Administration (GC/EA) whether the upgrade may be accepted pursuant to [5 C.F.R §2635.204\(c\)](#).
- I. This policy supersedes the previous [ADS 522.5.8](#) and any other previously-existing Agency or mission policies or practices concerning business class air travel.