

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL  
Division of Operations-Management

MEMORANDUM OM 15-34

May 27, 2015

To: All Regional Directors, Officers-in-Charge  
and Resident Officers

From: Anne Purcell, Associate General Counsel

Subject: Trial Advocacy Conference  
August 2 (arrival only) through August 7, 2015

We are very pleased that we are able to conduct our Trial Advocacy Conference this year. As detailed below, this conference provides our attorneys with an excellent opportunity to learn and develop the legal skills necessary to litigate our cases in all forums.

We have finalized arrangements for the Conference to be conducted at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel, 210 Peachtree Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia ([www.westinpeachtreeplazaatlanta.com](http://www.westinpeachtreeplazaatlanta.com)), beginning at 8:30 a.m., Monday, August 3 and concluding at 12:30 p.m., Friday, August 7, 2015. Participants are expected to travel to the conference on Sunday, August 2. This memorandum describes the conference, the conference materials and preparation, travel to the conference, lodging, conference dress, and telephone use. Attached are a list of the participants and instructors designated to attend the conference.

**CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION:** The Trial Advocacy program utilizes small, instructor-intensive group workshops to develop and refine trial skills including pretrial preparation, handling subpoena issues, witness preparation, direct and cross-examination, use of documentary evidence, rebuttal testimony, and application of the Federal Rules of Evidence. We expect to have a total of 9 groups, each with 10 student attorneys and 4 instructors. Each student attorney will be videoed several times during the week while examining a witness in a hypothetical case. After each examination, the instructors in the workshop will provide the student immediate feedback. The attorney and another instructor will then review the video recording in another room and discuss the examination in more depth.

**CONFERENCE MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:** We will send conference materials, including the hypothetical case to be used in the Trial Advocacy Conference, to participants very soon. Consistent with the Agency's use of electronic case files and NxGen, these materials will be provided to the participants in electronic form. Participants should save the materials on their Agency laptop and bring the laptop to the conference with them. Prior to the conference, participants should carefully review the materials to prepare for the training program. The preparation will include drafting a trial brief, and will include a pre-conference discussion with an assigned instructor. We will forward more specific instructions with the hypothetical case. **Please ensure that participants are allowed sufficient time (approximately 25-30hours total) for their preparation and preconference discussion.**

**TRAVEL TO CONFERENCE:** Conference participants should make their own transportation arrangements for arrival in time for the opening of the conference at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, August 3, 2015. **Participants will travel to the conference on Sunday, August 2, and return on Friday, August 7, unless otherwise authorized by the Division of Operations-Management.** Employees will receive travel compensation time for the Sunday travel. The conference will conclude no later than 12:30 p.m. on Friday, August 7.

Typically, when a traveler goes on temporary duty, the traveler is required to use the Contract City-Pair Program that offers YCA, Government Contract fare (fully refundable) or a -CA fare that is a capacity-controlled airline fare (for example MCA, QCA, or VCA, with rates that are lower than the normal YCA and may be available at the time of booking). All of these options are acceptable under the Contract City-Pair Program. This mandatory regulation is governed by Federal Travel Regulation, 41 CFR Part 301-10, FTR Amendment 2006-04. Because the contract city-pair fares have sky-rocketed over the years, we encourage Agency travelers to Agency conferences to take advantage of the exception that is noted in FTR 301-10.107(c) - *A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that, if used, will result in a lower trip cost to the Government.*

Accordingly, the two options for purchasing airline tickets are:

1. Purchasing a ticket on an YCA or a -CA fare (capacity controlled fare/fully refundable) by contacting Carlson Wagonlit reservation center at 1-800-787-6051. When purchasing a ticket through Carlson Wagonlit, the ticket will be automatically charged to the Agency Central Bill Account (CBA account).
2. Purchasing a ticket from a commercial carrier at a lower fare (normally a non-refundable fare) than the YCA or -CA fares, by the traveler paying for the ticket with the government travel card. If the traveler does not have a government credit card, a personal credit card may be used. The cost of the ticket and any fees associated with the booking will be reimbursed to the traveler provided it does not exceed the government contract fare (YCA or -CA). The traveler will be reimbursed after the conference by submitting a travel voucher. The receipt for the airline ticket purchase must show the form of payment on it (e.g., VISA XXXXXXXX9988). In this case, the person setting up the travel authorization should:
  1. Use the non-contract rate **only** if the rate is less than the contract rate offered by Carlson Wagonlit.
  2. Note in the comment field that the use of a non-contract carrier is authorized for this specific conference.

Purchasing a ticket on a commercial carrier to travel to the conference may result in a cost advantage to the Agency in comparison to the cost of purchasing a ticket on a contract carrier. The commercial carrier's lower ticket price will probably require advance purchase of a non-refundable ticket. Carriers usually assess an additional fee if these tickets are canceled or if the flight is rescheduled. While there is little risk that the conference would be canceled, there is the possibility that someone will not be able to make it to the conference for a legitimate reason.

In using commercial carrier lower cost flights, the traveler needs to be reasonably sure that, once the reservation is made, there will be no need to change the reservation. If there is a rare personal or family emergency that prevents the traveler from attending the conference, the traveler who purchased a ticket from a common carrier must:

1. Notify the conference coordinator (DAGC Rosalind Eddins-Hill).
2. Cancel the airline reservation.
3. Submit the travel voucher with the receipt of the airline ticket and cancellation fee with a letter stating the reason for not attending the conference. The letter should be scanned into the travel voucher.
4. Give the non-refundable e-ticket along with the cancellation/confirmation number to the Office Manager to keep for future travel requirements if the need arises later for the individual traveler. These tickets are usually good for up to a year. If not used, the overall savings for the collective use of the non-contract rates for the conference will justify the cost of the unused ticket.

Transportation from the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is available via MARTA train, taxi or shuttle service. Travel on MARTA takes about 20 minutes and the hotel is located on the MARTA line at Peachtree Center Station (approximately one block walking distance). The cost is \$2.50. The one-way cost for a taxi is approximately \$32.50, excluding tip. Super Shuttle is available for a one-way cost of \$16.50 or \$29 roundtrip. Advanced reservations on Super Shuttle are recommended and can be made by calling 1-800-258-3826. Attendees are encouraged to use MARTA or shuttle transportation to and from the hotel to limit Agency cost.

**CONFERENCE LODGING:** The Agency will pay for lodging for five nights (August 2 –August 6) by means of a purchase order. We are working with the hotel to secure the government rate for participants, who would like to extend their stay and will provide additional information as it becomes available. Participants extending their stay will be responsible for payment directly to the hotel for expenses relating to arrivals before Sunday, August 2, 2015 and departures after Friday, August 7, 2015, unless the extended stay is authorized by the Division of Operations-Management.

All arrangements for hotel accommodations will be made by the Division of Operations-Management. **Please do not contact the hotel directly to make reservations. The only exception would be if you are making arrangements to stay for a few days before or after the conference.** However, to assist us in making arrangements for hotel accommodations, participants must complete an online survey. The survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VLWJ62P>. The survey should be completed as soon as possible, but no later than **COB, Monday, July 13**, to ensure that reservations and appropriate accommodations are made for each participant.

The per diem rates for meals and incidental expenses in Atlanta are \$56 per day on full days and \$42 on the partial/travel days. To avoid having to decrease M&IE rates of participants as required by GSA Travel Regulations, we will not provide breakfast to conference participants. Please share this information about the per diem rates with the individuals in your office who will prepare your travel voucher so the correct amounts are entered in E2 Solutions and the vouchers can be processed without delay. Each office will be responsible for **submitting travel vouchers for all conference participants in their office through E2 Solutions by COB, Monday, August 17, 2015**. The CDC number for travel authorizations is 3203.

**CONFERENCE DRESS:** Casual dress is appropriate throughout the conference. We suggest that participants bring a light sweater or jacket as sometimes the meeting rooms are chilly.

**TELEPHONE:** To make phone calls from the hotel at the minimum cost, conference participants must use Agency calling cards or Agency cell phones if the Region has one available for use. All participants should bring their calling cards with them to the conference so that the Agency may avoid expensive hotel charges for long distance calls.

**QUESTIONS:** If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, the training program, or if an emergency arises that would prevent any participant from a timely arrival or attendance at the conference, please contact Rosalind Eddins-Hill (202-247-8630), John Doyle (202-501-1648) or Dan Collopy (202-744-9833) or at their respective e-mail addresses.

/s/

A.P

Attachments

cc: NLRBU

