

NIH Policy Manual

2300-550-3 - Compensatory Time off for Travel (CTT)

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Transmittal Notice

1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This manual chapter establishes NIH policy for eligibility and use of Compensatory Time off for Travel (CTT). This information was previously covered under travel in Manual Chapter 1500-04-10. This transmittal provides updates to formatting, hyperlinks, and References. A Scope section has replaced the former Coverage section. Within the Policy section, updates have been made to include further clarification on the use and management of CTT; the Forfeiture of unused CTT; Creditable Travel Time; and Creditable Travel Time for Remote Workers. The Records Retention and Disposal section and the Internal Controls section have been removed as they are no longer required.
2. **Filing Instructions:**

Remove: Manual Issuance 2300-550-3, dated 2/10/2015.

Insert: Manual Issuance 2300-550-3, dated 03/27/2024.

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Manual System, contact the Division of Compliance Management, OMA at 301-496-4606, or enter this URL: <https://oma.od.nih.gov/DMS/Pages/Manual-Chapters.aspx>

A. Purpose

This chapter addresses the NIH policy for eligibility and use of Compensatory Time off for Travel (CTT).

B. Scope

The CTT provisions apply to an employee – as defined in 5 U.S.C. § 5541(2) – of an Executive agency without regard to whether the employee is exempt from or covered by the overtime pay provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended. The NIH will continue to honor all current Collective Bargaining Agreements and will implement this policy consistent with the Agreements and its obligations under law, rule or regulation. At the NIH, coverage is as follows:

1. CTT provisions are applicable to:

- a. Title 5 employees*;
 - b. Title 42 appointed individuals*;
 - c. Senior Biomedical Research and Biomedical Product Assessment Service (SBRBPAS) employees*;
 - d. Senior Level (SL) and Scientific or Professional (ST); and
 - e. Prevailing Rate (Wage Grade) employees.
- * see exclusions below.

2. CTT provisions are not applicable to:

- a. Senior Executive Service (SES) employees;
- b. Title 42 SES equivalent employees including: NIH Deputy Directors, Institute or Center (IC) Directors, IC Deputy Directors, Scientific Directors, Clinical Directors, Scientific Executives, Associate Directors, and Office Heads in the NIH Office of the Director (OD) who report directly to the NIH Director;
- c. Employees in the 0602 – Physicians, 0680 – Dentists, and 0688 – Podiatrists occupational series who receive Title 38 Physician, Dentist, and Podiatrist pay (PDP); and
- d. Commissioned Corps Officers.

3. CTT cannot be earned by or for:

- a. Employees who are on intermittent work schedules. These employees are not eligible to earn and use CTT because they do not have a scheduled tour of duty for leave purposes.
- b. Employees whose travel is conducted in connection with union activities. These employees are not entitled to earn CTT for such travel because they are traveling for the benefit of the union and not for agency- related work purposes.
- c. Travel associated with a Permanent Change of Station (PCS).

C. Background

CTT was authorized in 5 U.S.C. § 5550b, effective January 28, 2005. CTT is earned by an employee for time spent in approved travel status (i.e., the time an employee is in transit between their official duty station and the temporary duty station, between two temporary duty stations, or between the employee's home and a temporary duty station outside the limits of the employee's official duty station) when such time is not otherwise compensable. As such, an employee cannot earn CTT during regular working hours as the employee is already being compensated for this time.

D. Policy

1. Use and Management of CTT:

- a. CTT is earned and used in 15-minute increments. It must be used within 26 pay periods from the time it was earned.
- b. There is no limitation on the amount of CTT an employee may earn.
- c. NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs) must charge CTT in the chronological order in which it was earned, with CTT earned first being charged first.
- d. ICOs will track each employee's CTT earned and used through the time and attendance system.
- e. CTT may not be advanced.
- f. An employee must request permission from his or her supervisor in the time and attendance system when scheduling the use of accrued CTT.
- g. By regulation, employees may not receive payment for unused CTT under any circumstances.
- h. Accrued CTT must not be considered in applying premium pay limitations or the established aggregate limitations on pay.

2. Forfeiture of Unused CTT:

- a. The employee must use all CTT earned by the end of the 26th pay period following the pay period in which it was earned, or such CTT will be forfeited. If an employee fails to use his or her accrued CTT before the end of the 26th pay period after the pay period during which it was earned due to an exigency of the service beyond the employee's control, the Executive Officer of the individual's ICO, at their sole and exclusive discretion, may extend the time limit for up to an additional 26 pay periods.
- b. CTT is also subject to forfeiture under the following circumstances:
 1. Upon voluntary transfer to another agency;
 2. Upon movement to a noncovered position; or
 3. Upon separation from the Federal Government.*

* See exceptions noted below for uniformed service or an on-the-job injury with entitlement to injury compensation at 5 CFR 550.1407(a)(2)

- c. However, unused CTT will be held in suspension for an employee who separates, or is placed in a leave without pay (LWOP) status, and later returns to NIH following:
 - 1. Separation or leave without pay to perform service in the uniformed services (as defined in 38 U.S.C. 4303 and 5 CFR 353.102) and a return to service through the exercise of a reemployment right, or
 - 2. Separation or leave without pay due to an on-the-job injury with entitlement to injury compensation under 5 U.S.C. Chapter 81.

Accordingly, the employee must be advised (upon return to duty), in writing of the requirement to use all CTT by the end of the 26th pay period following the pay period in which he or she returns, or forfeit the CTT.

3. Travel Status

- a. **Creditable Travel Time:** Time spent in a travel status outside of regular working hours between the employee's official duty station and a temporary duty station, between two temporary duty stations, or between an employee's home and a temporary duty station or transportation terminal outside the limits of his or her official duty station is considered creditable travel time.
- b. **Commuting Time:** Travel outside of regular working hours between an employee's home and a temporary duty station or transportation terminal outside the limits of his or her official duty station is considered creditable travel time. However, the normal home-to-work/work-to-home commuting time is deducted when calculating the creditable travel time. Travel within the limits of an employee's official duty station is considered equivalent to commuting time and is not creditable time in a travel status. However, travel outside of regular working hours between a worksite and a transportation terminal is creditable travel time, and no commuting time offset applies.
- c. **Creditable Travel Time - Remote Workers:** The NIH will not permit remote workers to earn CTT when required to report to the agency worksite or other temporary duty station if travel from their official worksite/alternative worksite is less than 50 miles to the agency worksite/temporary duty station. Remote employees who are required to travel more than 50 miles away from their official worksite/alternative worksite to the agency worksite or other temporary duty station may be afforded CTT for official travel if the approved itinerary requires the employee to be in a travel status, when such time is not otherwise compensable.
- d. **Creditable Waiting Time:** Airline travelers generally are required to arrive at the airport at a designated pre-departure time (e.g., 1 - 3 hours before the scheduled departure, depending on whether the flight is domestic or international). Such waiting time at the airport is considered usual waiting time and is creditable time in a travel status when such time is not otherwise compensable. In addition, time spent at an intervening airport waiting for a connecting flight (e.g., 1 or 2 hours) also is creditable time in a travel status. If an employee experiences an unusually long wait prior to his or her initial departure or between actual periods of travel during which the employee is free to rest, sleep, or otherwise use the time for his or her own purposes, the

extended waiting time outside the employee's regular working hours is not creditable time in a travel status. It is NIH policy that CTT earned for pre-departure will be capped at two hours for a domestic flight and three hours for an international flight.

4. Required Procedures:

ICOs should establish internal procedures for an employee to request credit for CTT. The following two requirements must be included in the procedures.

- a. CTT must be approved prior to commencement of the trip and the Travel Authorization needs to state the traveler's eligibility to earn CTT. This approval should be received from the employee's Leave Approving Official, unless this authority has been otherwise re-delegated in the employee's ICO. The Travel Planner should select "Comp Time Off for Travel" from the listing displayed under "Other Authorizations" in the automated travel system. Because the approval process may occasionally occur outside of the routing within the travel system, it is permissible for the Travel Authorization to be modified after travel commences to reflect pre-authorization. When this occurs, supporting documentation evidencing this is to be uploaded into the travel system.
- b. Upon completion of the trip, written documentation showing CTT earned must be submitted to the supervisor on [NIH Form 2920-1](#). This should take place within five working days of employee's completion of the travel status.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provides a fact sheet with links to question-and-answer guidance as well as examples on CTT online at:

http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/compensatory_time.asp.

E. Roles and Responsibilities

1. **Institute, Center, and Office (ICO) Directors:** ICO Directors (or their designees) are responsible for administering the NIH policies and procedures on CTT. They are also responsible for ensuring that the appropriate staff persons are in compliance with recordkeeping and reporting requirements.
2. **Institute and Center (ICO) Executive Officers:** ICO Executive Officers are responsible for using their discretion in approving the extension of CTT, as appropriate, described in D. Policy, 2.
3. **Workforce Relations Division (WRD)/Office of Human Resources (OHR):** WRD is responsible for providing technical guidance to the ICOs and for developing written policy concerning CTT laws and regulations. Furthermore, WRD is responsible for providing information and training regarding CTT policies and procedures to ICO staff. WRD is also responsible for reporting employees' use of CTT as requested by the Office of Personnel Management. This information will be provided to the OHR by ICOs upon request, at which time WRD will compile NIH-wide information.

4. **Leave Approving Officials:** Leave approving officials are responsible for approving or disapproving requests for the earning and use of CTT. They are responsible for administering leave policies regarding CTT equitably and reasonably. They must ensure that all employees under their supervision are informed of the procedural requirements that must be followed in requesting and using CTT.
5. **Travel Approving Officials:** Travel approving officials are responsible for ensuring travel is authorized and approved by an authorized management official. They are responsible for determining the method(s) of travel and transportation most advantageous to the Government, considering cost and other relevant factors. They must ensure that travel is arranged so that the need for CTT is eliminated or minimized.
6. **Employees:** Employees are expected to request and obtain advance approval for CTT. Employees are also responsible for completing [NIH Form 2920-1, NIH Compensatory Time for Travel \(CTT\) Request and Approval Form](#) within five work days of completing their travel.

F. References

1. [5 U.S.C. § 5550b \(Compensatory Time Off for Travel\)](#)
2. [5 CFR 550, Subpart N \(Compensatory Time Off for Travel\)](#)
3. [HHS Instruction 550-3, Compensatory Time Off for Travel \(CTT\)](#)
4. [HHS Instruction 590-1, Physicians and Dentist Pay \(Title 38\)](#)
5. [HHS Guide for Timekeeping Handbook](#)
6. [NIH Manual Chapter 1500, Travel Policies and Procedures](#)
7. [NIH Manual Chapter 1730, Forms Management](#)
8. [NIH Manual Chapter 1743, Managing Federal Records](#)

G. Definitions

1. **Compensable:** Periods of time creditable as hours of work for the purpose of determining a specific pay entitlement, as identified in section D(3) above.
2. **Creditable Travel:** Travel for work purposes that is officially authorized and approved by an organization's designated approving official.
3. **Official Duty Station:** the geographic area surrounding an employee's regular work site that is the same as the area designated by the employing agency for the purpose of determining whether travel time is compensable for the purpose of determining overtime pay. This geographic area must have a mileage radius of not greater than 50 miles to determine whether an employee's travel is within or outside the limits of the employee's official duty station for determining entitlement to overtime pay for travel (See 5 CFR 550.112(j) and 551.422(d).
4. **Temporary Duty Station (TDY):** A place, away from the employee's official duty station where the employee is authorized to travel and conduct Government business.
5. **Travel Authorization:** Written permission to travel on official business, documented on the ICO's internal travel request form or within an electronic system. It must

include specific purposes, itinerary and estimated costs.

6. **Travel Status:** The time an employee is in transit between their official duty station and the temporary duty station, between two temporary duty stations, or between the employee's home and a temporary duty station outside the limits of their official duty station. This includes any usual waiting time (defined below) that precedes or interrupts such travel.
7. **Travel Voucher:** A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel, including permanent change of station (PCS) travel.
8. **Usual Waiting Time:** Up to two (2) hours prior to a domestic flight, up to three (3) hours prior to an international flight, or 30 minutes prior to travel using other modes of transportation (bus, train, etc.). Note: Supervisors may adjust the foregoing times in unusual circumstances, (e.g., cancelled flights that require waiting in line to make alternate arrangements may be creditable as CTT for the extended waiting time).