

# NIH POLICY MANUAL

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

Issuing Office: OD/OM/OHR/WRD, 301-402-9203

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1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This is a new manual chapter that 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.

2. **Filing Instructions:**

**Remove:** Manual Issuance 1500-04-10 – Compensatory Time for Travel, dated 4/23/12.

**Insert:** Manual Issuance 2300-550-3, dated 2/10/15.

**PLEASE NOTE:** For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Manual System, contact the Division of Management Support, OMA on 301-496-2832, or enter this URL:

<http://oma.od.nih.gov/public/MS/manualchapters/Pages/default.aspx>

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### A. Purpose:

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

### B. Coverage:

The CTT provisions apply to an employee <sup>1</sup> 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. At the NIH, coverage is as follows:

1. CTT provisions are applicable to:
  - a. Title 5 employees\*;

- b. Title 42 appointed individuals\*;
- c. Senior Level (SL) and Scientific or Professional (ST) positions;
- d. Senior Biomedical Research Service (SBRS) employees; 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: 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 602 – Medical Officer and 680 – Dental Officer occupational series, regardless of pay plan or hiring authority;
- d. Commissioned Corps Officers; and
- e. Non-FTE persons.

3. CTT cannot be earned for:

- a. Employees who are on intermittent work schedules are not eligible to earn and use CTT because they do not have a scheduled tour of duty for leave purposes.
- b. Employees who travel in connection with union activities are not entitled to earn CTT 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).

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<sup>1</sup>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.

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## **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 the residence/office and the temporary 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. 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 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.
- b. ICs must charge CTT in the chronological order in which it was earned, with CTT earned first being charged first.
- c. ICs will track each employee's CTT earned and used through the time and attendance system. Note: CTT may not be advanced.
- d. An employee must request permission from his or her supervisor in the time and attendance system when scheduling the use of accrued CTT. By regulation, employees cannot receive payment for unused CTT.

2. **Forfeit CTT:** The employee must use all of the CTT earned by the end of the 26th pay period following the pay period in which the employee returns to duty, 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 IC, at their sole and exclusive discretion, may extend the time limit for up to an additional 26 pay periods.

3. **Creditable Travel Time:** While 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, the normal home-to-work/work-to-home commuting time is deducted when calculating the

creditable travel time.

4. **Creditable Waiting Time:** CTT often may be earned as airline travelers 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. 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.
5. **Required Procedures:** ICs 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 IC. 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 question and answer guidance as well as examples on CTT online at:

[http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/compensatory\\_time.asp](http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/compensatory_time.asp).

## E. References:

1. [5 U.S.C. § 5550b \(Compensatory Time Off for Travel\)](#)

2. [5 CFR 550, Subpart N \(Compensatory Time Off for Travel\)](#)
3. [5 CFR 530, Subpart B \(Aggregate Limitation on Pay\)](#)
4. [HHS Instruction 550-3, Compensatory Time Off for Travel \(CTT\)](#)
5. [HHS Instruction 590-1, Physicians and Dentist Pay \(Title 38\)](#)
6. [HHS Guide for Timekeeping Handbook](#)
7. [NIH Manual Chapter 1500, Travel Policies and Procedures](#)
8. [NIH Manual Chapter 1743, Keeping and Destroying Records](#)

## **F. Definitions:**

1. **Compensable:** Periods of time creditable as hours of work for the purpose of determining a specific pay entitlement.
2. **Creditable Travel:** Travel for work purposes that is officially authorized and approved by an organization's designated approving official.
3. **Employee:** An employee is an individual who is appointed in the civil service, engaged in the performance of a Federal function and subject to the supervision of another Federal employee, or an employee paid from non-appropriated funds (see 5 U.S.C. 6301).
4. **Official Duty Station:** The location of the employee's permanent work assignment. The limits of the official station will be the corporate limits of the city or town in which the employee is stationed. If the employee is not stationed in an incorporated city or town, the official station is the reservation, station, or established area, or in the case of large reservations, the established subdivision thereof, having definite boundaries within which the designated post of duty is located.
5. **Temporary Duty Location (TDY):** A place, away from the employee's official duty station where the employee is authorized to travel and conduct Government business.
6. **Travel Authorization:** Written permission to travel on official business, documented on the IC's internal travel request form or within an electronic system. It must include specific purposes, itinerary and estimated costs.
7. **Travel Status:** The time an employee is in transit between the residence/office and the temporary duty station

8. **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.
9. **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).

## **G. Responsibilities:**

1. **Institute and Center (IC) Directors:** IC Directors (or their designees) are responsible for administering the NIH policies and procedures on CTT. They are also responsible for assuring that the appropriate staff persons are in compliance with recordkeeping and reporting requirements.
2. **Institute and Center (IC) Executive Officers:** Approve the extension of CTT as described in D. Policy, 2.
3. **Workforce Relations Division (WRD)/Office of Human Resources (OHR):** WRD is responsible for providing technical guidance to the ICs 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 IC staff.
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:** Ensuring travel is authorized and approved by an authorized management official. Determining the method(s) of travel and transportation most advantageous to the Government, considering cost and other relevant factors. Ensuring 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.

7. **NIH:** will be responsible for reporting employees' use of CTT as requested by the Office of Personnel Management. This information will be provided to the OHR by ICs upon request, at which time the OHR will compile NIH-wide information.

## **H. Records Retention and Disposal:**

All records pertaining to this chapter must be retained and disposed of under the authority of [NIH Manual 1743](#), "Keeping and Destroying Records," Appendix 1, "NIH Records Control Schedules" (as amended). These records must be maintained in accordance with current NIH Records Management and Federal guidelines. Contact your [IC Records Liaison](#) or the NIH Records Officer for additional information.

## **I. Internal Controls:**

The purpose of this manual issuance is to address NIH policy for eligibility and use of Compensatory Time off for Travel.

1. **Office Responsible for Reviewing Internal Controls Relative to this Chapter:**

Workforce Relations Division (WRD), Office of Human Resources (OHR), Office of Management (OM), Office of the Director (OD), NIH.

2. **Frequency of Review (in years):**

The issuing office will review this manual chapter every 5 years.

3. **Method of Review:**

WRD will periodically run data calls to review the use of CTT across NIH. Such reports will be run no less than every 5 years. If any concentrated pattern of misuse is identified, educational efforts will be pursued to retrain staff in the IC in question. Misuse will be categorized as employees that are ineligible for CTT being found to have balances of CTT. Concentrated patterns will be identified as groups of employees within the same office or branch OR employees with the same Administrative Officer (AO) or Time Keeper (TK).

4. **Review Reports are sent to:**

Director of the Office of Human Resources and Deputy Director for Management, NIH.

