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Foreign
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FMD 03-003
MAP 03-006

TO: All Foreign Market Development Program (FMD) Cooperators and Market Access Program (MAP) Participants

SUBJECT: Reimbursement of Telephone Calls and Internet Expenses while on Program Travel

BACKGROUND:

FMD Cooperators and MAP Participants have asked for clarification regarding the eligibility of telephone calls made and Internet expenses incurred while on travel.

ISSUE:

What telephone calls and Internet expenses are eligible for reimbursement while on travel?

POLICY:

Travelers are eligible for full reimbursement of documented program-related telephone calls and program-related Internet expenses.

Travelers are eligible for full reimbursement of documented emergency calls to notify a family member or doctor of the occurrence of an injury or illness.

Travelers are also eligible for limited reimbursement of documented personal telephone calls and personal Internet expenses while on program-related travel. For domestic travel, the daily limit for personal telephone calls and personal Internet expenses is $5.00 (in total) per lodging night. For international travel, the daily limit for personal telephone calls and personal Internet expenses is $15.00 (in total) per lodging night. These reimbursement limits are cumulative. In other words, personal telephone calls and personal Internet expenses are reimbursable up to the daily limit multiplied by the number of lodging nights, regardless of whether they are incurred evenly throughout travel or in just one or two days. For example, a traveler on an international trip with five lodging nights may be reimbursed for up to $75.00 of actual personal telephone calls and personal Internet expenses documented during the course of the trip.

Telephone and Internet expenditures must be documented as follows:

- Individual telephone calls placed or Internet access gained using the hotel telephone system must be itemized on the hotel bill and clearly annotated as "official business," "emergency" or "personal."

- Internet access using the hotel business center or similar service offered by a business other than the hotel must be itemized on a bill from the hotel or business and clearly annotated as "official business," "emergency" or "personal."

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- Individual telephone calls placed or Internet access gained using a telephone card, other than a pre-paid telephone card, should be itemized on the bill from the company that issued the telephone card and clearly annotated as "official business," "emergency" or "personal."

- Individual telephone calls placed and Internet access gained using a prepaid telephone card are not itemized on a bill. However, the purchase price of a prepaid telephone card may be reimbursed provided that a receipt indicating the purchase price of the card is included when claiming reimbursement. If a traveler desires to use a prepaid telephone card for program-related telephone and Internet access and for personal telephone and Internet access, separate cards should be purchased for program-related use and personal use and the expenses should be claimed separately. Emergency calls can be placed using either type of card. Please note that reimbursement for the purchase of telephone cards for personal telephone and Internet expenses is limited to the daily rate multiplied by the number of lodging nights. Remaining minutes on prepaid telephone cards should only be used for subsequent program-related travel. Prepaid calling card expenses must not be claimed for reimbursement more than once.

- Individual telephone calls placed and Internet access gained using wireless telephones (owned by the Cooperator or by the traveler) should be itemized on the bill from the wireless telephone service provider and clearly annotated as "official business," "emergency" or "personal." If no charges are indicated because the airtime used is covered by a prepaid plan, reimbursement may be obtained using the proportion of claimed airtime to total monthly airtime provided under the particular plan. A prorated share of any associated monthly service fee may also be claimed (calculated using the same proportion of claimed airtime to total monthly airtime.) Any eligible telephone calls or Internet expenses that are billed individually because they exceed the monthly limitation in the prepaid plan should be itemized on the bill from the wireless telephone service provider and clearly annotated as "official business," "emergency" or "personal."

Please note that wireless telephone equipment, equipment repair, insurance and other related charges are not reimbursable under FMD or MAP.

Please see program notices MAP-98017/FMD-98013 dated November 4, 1998, and MAP-99009/FMD-99005 dated September 3, 1999, as well as 7 CFR 1484.54(b)(41) and 1484.55(a)(27) for additional information.

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