

Travel Period for 24-Hour Rule

Title 74, § 500.9, Subsection E., reads: “Reimbursement for meals and lodging on out-of-state trips shall not begin more than twenty-four (24) hours before the meeting, workshop, conference or other objective of trip begins and shall not continue more than twenty-four (24) hours after said meeting, workshop, conference or other objective of trip ends.” (Note: we apply this rule to in-state travel when appropriate.)

Some agencies are having difficulty applying the 24-hour rule start times properly. We have seen such registration times beginning 2 or more days prior to the actual start of the event. Such early starts for per diem and lodging are not appropriate without proper justification, such as special business-related meetings prior to the conference. Activities that are primarily provided clearly for the entertainment of participants, such as sightseeing tours, athletic events, etc. are not appropriate. However, when the event begins with a meal or dinner reception and are considered “meet and greet” activities, these could be acceptable for the timing of the 24-hour rule. Again, proper documentation of the business purpose for participating in such early (or later) activities should be provided with the travel voucher as justification for extending the start of the 24-hour travel period.

There may be other appropriate situations such as limitations on flight times requiring an earlier flight. In this case, with proper justification, we could accept the early travel status. However, if it is just a person’s preference to leave early when later flights would be available, the early travel status exceeding the 24-hour rule would not be acceptable. Travel status for receiving per diem and lodging would be based on the 24-hour rule from the start of the event.