



HIGHLIGHTS

BACKGROUND:

U.S. Postal Service employees and approving officials use eTravel, a web-based system to electronically create, submit, and review travel expense reports. They may not use their official travel card for personal business or exceed cash advance limits. Also, when an employee is overpaid for travel expenses, the employee should repay the amount to the Postal Service. The Postal Service incurred \$95 million in total travel expenses in fiscal year 2011.

The objective was to determine whether Postal Service employees properly claimed air and rail expenses on their travel reimbursement requests and appropriately used their travel card according to policy.

WHAT THE OIG FOUND:

Postal Service employees improperly claimed expenses on their travel reimbursements and inappropriately used their travel card. We referred issues to the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General's Office of Investigations as appropriate.

We found six cases in which employees canceled a higher-priced airfare, traveled on a lower-priced one, but claimed the higher-priced fare on the travel reimbursement request. We also found 39 cases in which employees claimed a canceled fare but did not reimburse the Postal Service.

In addition, eTravel allows employees to have their per diem reimbursements paid to the travel card rather than directly to their personal bank account, which can result in a credit balance and encourage employees to use it for personal purposes, which is prohibited. Our review of 10 employees who most frequently elected to have these reimbursements paid to the travel card disclosed six made multiple personal purchases or excessive cash withdrawals.

Although each instance is unique, overall, approving managers do not have a mechanism to adequately monitor travel card activity. Also, the Postal Service did not have clear instructions explaining how to handle canceled airfare. As a result, the Postal Service is exposed to inappropriate or fraudulent activity that could negatively affect its reputation.

WHAT THE OIG RECOMMENDED:

We recommended management provide additional mechanisms for approving managers to monitor employees travel card activity. We also recommended management develop clear procedures for employees on how to account for canceled airfares and remove the eTravel System provision that allows employees to apply personal reimbursements to their travel card.