

UPCOMING ENROLLMENT DEADLINES:

Next:
Monday, March 19, 2012

Future:
Thursday, April 19, 2012
Friday, May 18, 2012



QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

Does every participant need to sign for their benefits at distribution?

Yes. Third party pick-up is not permitted. Each participant should sign the certification log when they pick-up their benefits.

VANPOOL PARTICIPANTS REMOVED FROM EMPLOYMENT

In the course of a fraud, waste and abuse investigation, the Department of the Navy (DON) identified vanpool participants who were misusing the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) benefits. The case took place in North Carolina where the participants were receiving the TIP benefit to participate in a vanpool. This vanpool was owned and operated by a federal employee who charged the maximum benefit to fellow colleagues to ride in his vanpool. The owner himself did not receive the benefit, but he did collect TIP vouchers from four of his colleagues to ride in his van. Sounds like it could be a legitimate vanpool, right?

The local point of contact (POC) required vanpool logs to be submitted on a monthly basis to confirm that TIP participants were riding the required number of days. Participants were required to complete the log each month by marking the days they rode and by certifying to its accuracy by signing the log and submitting it to the POC. The vanpool logs for this particular van reported that participants were riding and meeting the riding requirements. Sounds good. Looks like the vanpool is a success, right? Well, the one problem was that the participants rarely, if ever, rode in the van.

In this case, the POC received a tip that this particular van was consistently showing up without any riders (only a driver). The Command began to monitor the van regularly over a three to four month period and compare what they observed with what was reported on the vanpool logs that were submitted. The investigation revealed that the vanpool logs did not match the riding pattern of the participants in the vanpool. In fact some riders failed to ride a single day in some months, yet the riders certified on their vanpool log to riding more than the minimum number of days required. Even though the participants were not riding, they continued to collect the TIP benefit and turn it over to their colleague. One participant even admitted to receiving a financial kickback from the driver for his participation in the vanpool.

The Command proposed that the owner/driver and all riders involved be removed from federal employment. One of the riders contested his

removal through the Merit Systems Protection Board, but the administrative judge upheld the agency's decision to remove him on the charges of negligent performance of a duty (signing the vanpool log with verifying the accuracy of the ridership notations) and conduct unbecoming a federal employee (various fraud and false claims offenses). Only one employee returned to Federal employment. In addition to these consequences, the participants were required to repay the Federal government over \$5000 for benefits that they had received, but failed to use in accordance with program policy.

The Office of Financial Operations (FMO) works to develop policies that protect the government from fraud, waste and abuse. FMO takes this responsibility seriously and presents this case as a reminder that all TIP POCs and participants have that same responsibility to protect the government from wasting or misusing resources. By signing the TIP application, participants are certifying to the fact that they will abide by and use the TIP benefit in accordance with program policy. FMO has developed a Vanpool Information Sheet to provide easy access to the basic policies related to participating in a vanpool. Check out the info sheet at: http://www.fmo.navy.mil/docs/SERVICES/TIP/VanPool_Info.pdf. It is important to remember that TIP is a benefit, not an entitlement, and the TIP policy is in place to ensure the benefits are properly used. If you have seen TIP benefits being abused notify your local fraud, waste and abuse department or submit a hotline complaint to the Naval Inspector General at <http://www.ig.navy.mil/complaints/ComplaintProcedure.htm>. Together we can work to protect these resources to ensure that benefits are available for those who use them correctly.



PERSONNEL CHANGES

The Office of Financial Operations (FMO) would like to thank Jimmy Morrow for his support of the Transportation Incentive Program over the last ten months. Mr Morrow will be transitioning out of FMO and onto new professional opportunities. His last day with the Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) will be March 9th. Please send all new enrollees for the month of March (and future months) and any TIP questions to either Joshua Coover or the TIP email box as noted below.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Please ensure all new enrollees complete the most recent version of the TIP application found here: http://www.fmo.navy.mil/docs/SERVICES/TIP/TIP_Application_2011.pdf
- TIP POCs should use the most recent version of the TIP Alphabetical Listing of new enrollees found here: http://www.fmo.navy.mil/docs/SERVICES/TIP/TIP_Alphabetical_List_Enrollees.xls

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