

## Commuting Area and Distance Requirements for Various Benefits

Commuting Area is defined somewhat differently for various benefits. These are the relevant definitions:

### For CSRS and FERS – Discontinued Service Retirement

**From: CSRS and FERS Handbook  
Discontinued Service Retirement Chapter 44  
Section 44A2.1-3 Condition: Directed Reassignments**

**C. Reassignment  
Outside  
Commuting Area**

An employee's reassignment to another location outside the commuting area is qualifying for discontinued service retirement if:

- The new work site is outside the commuting area applicable to the old work site; and
- Complying with the change would compel the employee to change his or her residence in order to continue employment.

Only if the new work site is outside the commuting area applicable to the old work site does each employee's personal circumstance become relevant.

EXAMPLE: Washington, DC, and Baltimore, MD are in separate commuting areas. Nonetheless, some employees live in one city and work in the other. If an employee who lives in Baltimore and commutes to Washington is reassigned to Baltimore, the employee does not become eligible for discontinued service retirement because he or she does not need to change residence.

**D. Determination of  
Commuting Area**

The employing agency uses RIF rules to determine the area that constitutes the local commuting area. This commuting area is then used for discontinued service retirement. **(See 5 CFR Part 351.)** If a local installation needs assistance in establishing a commuting area, it should seek assistance through agency channels.

#### **OPM RIF**

**5 CFR Part 351.203** - Local commuting area means the geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to their usual employment.

### For Severance Pay

**5 CFR § 550.701 5  
Subpart G—Severance Pay  
§ 550.703 Definitions**

*Commuting area* means the geographic area surrounding a work site that encompasses the localities where people live and reasonably can be expected to travel back and forth daily to work, as established by the employing agency based on the generally held expectations of the local community. When an employee's residence is within the standard commuting area for a work site, the work site is within the employee's commuting area. When an employee's residence is outside the standard commuting area for a proposed new work site, the employee's commuting area is deemed to include the expanded area surrounding the employee's residence and including all destinations

that can be reached via a commuting trip that is not significantly more burdensome than the current commuting trip. This excludes a commuting trip from a residence where the employee planned to stay only temporarily until he or she could find a more permanent residence closer to his or her work site. For this purpose, a commuting trip to a new work site is considered significantly more burdensome if it would compel the employee to change his or her place of residence in order to continue employment, taking into account commuting time and distance, availability of public transportation, cost, and any other relevant factors.

## Relocation Benefits

### This is the definition OPM uses for Relocation “Incentives”

A position is considered to be in a different geographic area if the worksite of the new position is 50 or more miles from the worksite of the position held immediately before the move. If the worksite of the new position is less than 50 miles from the worksite of the position held immediately before the move, but the employee must relocate (i.e., establish a new residence) to accept the position, an authorized agency official may waive the 50-mile requirement and pay the employee a relocation incentive. In all cases, an employee must establish a residence in the new geographic area before the agency may pay the employee a relocation incentive.

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/HTML/RELBNFNS.asp>

**This definition from Publication 164 is currently used by USPS.** The collective bargaining agreement refers to Methods Handbook F-10 as the proper source, but it has been replaced by the F-12 and F-15 handbooks, neither of which has the current rule.

### 43 As a bargaining employee, if I am reassigned to another position outside my commuting area under the terms of my collective bargaining agreement, am I entitled to relocation benefits?

Yes If your reassignment is involuntary and falls under the provisions of Article 12 of the applicable collective bargaining agreement, and your new position meets the 50-mile rule as defined by IRS regulations (see exhibit 41A), then you are entitled to relocation benefits in accordance with Article 12 See exhibit 41B, which shows the relocation benefits available to bargaining employees.

#### Exhibit 41A

#### The 50-Mile Rule

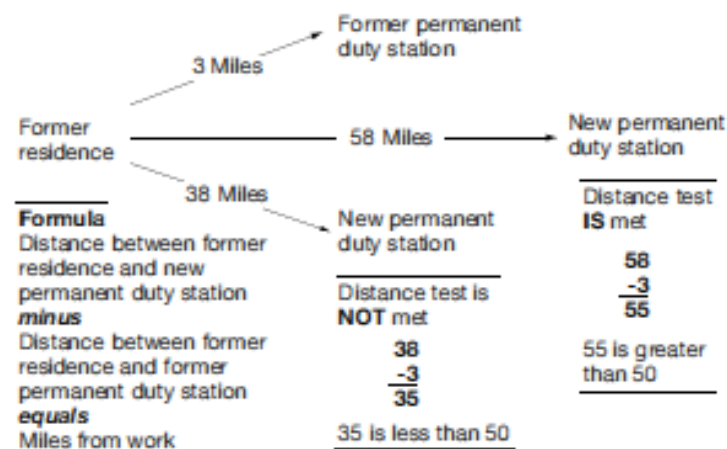


Exhibit 41B

**Overview of Relocation Benefits for Bargaining and Nonbargaining Employees**

<b>Relocation Benefit</b>	<b>Bargaining Employees</b>	<b>Nonbargaining Employees</b>
Advance house hunting <sup>1</sup>	1 trip	1 trip in lump-sum calculation
Spouse on trip	Yes	Yes
Dependent children on trip	No	No – child care is included in lump-sum calculation
Return trips to old station	None	1 trip
Miscellaneous expense allowance	\$300 (if married) \$150 (if single)	\$2,500
En route expenses	Yes	Yes
<b>Relocation management firm (RMF) Services</b>		
Movement of household goods	Yes	Yes
Storage of household goods	60 days	60 days
Allowance for household goods	18,000 lbs.	18,000 lbs.
Temporary quarters <sup>2</sup>	30 days	30 days (renter) 60 days (homeowner) in lump-sum calculation
Residence sell or buy transactions	Yes	Yes
RMF home purchase	No	Yes – nonbargaining EAS 19 and above with a qualified home
Equity loss consideration	No	Yes
Tax assistance	No	Yes
Relocation leave	5 days	5 days

<sup>1</sup>Restriction on total number of days. Consult relocation management firm.

<sup>2</sup>Employees are subject to a capped limit. Consult relocation management firm.