



United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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Office of the General Counsel

B-266190

June 5, 1996

Ms. Brenda Barker  
Manager, Accounts Receivable & Travel Team  
Bureau of Reclamation Service Center  
Finance and Accounting Services  
P.O. Box 25508  
Building 67, Denver Federal Center  
Denver, CO 80225-0508

Dear Ms. Barker:

This replies to your letter of September 12, 1995, your reference D-7736, concerning the charges for excess weight of Mr. Richard F. Wells' household goods that were shipped incident to his transfer.

The total weight of Mr. Wells' shipment of household goods was 25,600 pounds, and 7,840 pounds of that total consisted of household goods that had already been packed and were resting in storage when the mover arrived to include them with the rest of the shipment. Since the mover did not assess packing charges for these particular goods, Mr. Wells believes that since the mover's packing charges only related to 17,760 (25,600 - 7,840) pounds of his shipment, which is within the weight Mr. Wells is authorized to ship at government expense, he should not have to pay for any of the packing charges that would be assessed under the formula normally used to determine excess weight charges.

The Bureau of Reclamation correctly applied the formula for determining excess weight charges found in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR), § 308-8.3(b)(5), of multiplying the ratio of the excess weight to the "total weight of the shipment" times the "total charges" of the shipment. We have previously considered the argument that an employee's liability for packing charges may be separately determined or that packing charges should be apportioned to the excess weight of household goods as reduced by the weight of household goods for which no packing charges were incurred. We concluded that the formula in the FTR, which has the force and effect of law, could not be modified and that the weight of

household goods for which no packing charges were incurred comprised a portion of the "total weight of the shipment." See James Knapp, B-216723, Aug. 21, 1985, copy enclosed. Thus, Mr. Wells' suggested computation may not be adopted, and he is liable for a prorated portion of the packing charges.

Sincerely yours,

Lowell Dodge  
Associate General Counsel

Enclosure

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**DIGEST**

Liability of an employee who shipped household goods in excess of the 18,000-pound weight limit is to be determined under Federal Travel Regulation § 302-8.3(b)(5) based on a proration of the excess weight to the total weight of the shipment multiplied by the total charges for the shipment. The employee is not entitled to reduce the excess weight figure by the weight of 7,840 pounds of household goods that had already been packed or to compute his liability for packing charges separately from his liability for other charges for the total shipment.