



DOC Charge Card Program

APC Digest

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2014

Agency Program Coordinators, Cardholders, Approving Officials, and Managers of Cardholders and Approving Officials shall read and understand the DOC policy ~ Commerce Acquisition Manual 1313.301

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

DOC Approving Officials 2

The Importance of Reconciliation 2

Charge Card Security 2

Conferences: Purchase vs. Travel Card Use 3

OMB MAX Website 3

HCHB Green Store 3

Best Practices: Convenience Checks 4

Mandatory Online Purchase Card Refresher Training

On October 1, 2013, the Department of Commerce launched an interactive, scenario-based online refresher training course. This course is mandatory for all purchase cardholders, approving officials, and agency program coordinators annually. Failure to complete the course could result in possible suspension of cardholder accounts. **Refresher training shall be completed no later than July 30, 2014.**

The Purchase Card Refresher Training Course is located on the Commerce Learning Center's (CLC) parent website at:

<https://doc.learn.com>. In order to obtain a certificate, **there are seven (7) modules that must be completed** (each module is an average of approximately 2-3 minutes long). This is the only

refresher training requirement and will be presented in the next iteration of CAM Chapter 1313.301, the Department's Purchase Card Program policy.



MORE Customized Purchase Card Training...

In an effort to provide an all-encompassing training experience for purchase cardholders approving officials, and agency program coordinators, the Department's policy (CAM Chapter 1313.301) requires that cardholders and approving officials take the customized DOC training course.

The course was developed to reinforce roles and responsibili-

ties as well as processes within the purchase card community at the federal and more specifically the agency level. Many bureaus offer this course in-person at a minimum twice a year for individuals new to the program.

To ensure the course can accommodate everyone participating in DOC's purchase card program, the Department is working to

develop an on-line interactive version of the customized training. The online version will be available on the CLC website in fiscal year 2015. Stay tuned!

Approving Officials ~ DOC Needs You!

The role of the Approving Official (AO) is *critical* to the Department's charge card program. The AO ensures that purchases are made for official government business and used appropriately. In essence, AOs help mitigate instances of fraud, waste, and abuse.

AOs are essential throughout the purchasing process, from pre-approval - making sure purchases are for official government business, ensuring funds are available, and proper approval is obtained prior to purchase; and post-purchase - making sure appropriate documentation is obtained, resolving questionable transac-

tions, and ensuring cardholders reconcile transactions and statements within the reconciliation timeframe.

In addition, AOs are responsible for requesting changes to cardholder accounts, ensuring cardholders obtain required training, maintaining cardholder transaction files, reporting lost, stolen or compromised accounts to the APC, and reporting suspected fraud, waste, and abuse to the OIG.

Based on this list, you can see the importance of this role in protecting the Department's assets.



Reminders:

- ⇒ Individuals with a single purchase limit above the micro-purchase threshold (\$3,000) must have a Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) **AND** have a warrant issued by their Head of Contracting Office (HCO).
- ⇒ For purchases made *at or below* the micro-purchase threshold, cardholder transaction files must be maintained for a minimum of 3 years from final payment.
- ⇒ Purchases made *above* the micro-purchase threshold, cardholder transaction files must be maintained for a minimum of 6 years and 3 months from final payment.

The Importance of Reconciliation

Cardholders and AOs often focus primarily on the pre-approval process of a purchase, that the post-approval/reconciliation process becomes an "after-thought".

Recent Departmental reviews indicate that the Department needs to improve the accuracy and timeliness of proper reconciliation.

Reconciliation is necessary for several reasons:

1. Ensures the transaction is appropriate and for official government business.
 2. Ensures the charge is correct and that services/supplies are appropriately rendered and received.
 3. Ensures purchase logs are documented and prices align with receipts and invoices.
 4. Ensures charges are applied to the appropriate funding codes.
 5. Ensures personal property is appropriately recorded.
 6. Ensures all appropriate documentation is received and recorded in a cardholder transaction file.
- Both pre – and post activities are very important in validating proper and appropriate purchases.

Charge Card Security

Cardholders are required to take appropriate precautions to protect charge card and account information. Disclosure or unauthorized use is a violation of the Privacy Act.

Account information should only be given to vendors to complete a purchase transaction (cardholders should never permit merchants to retain a copy of the charge card). Cards and account information should be kept in a secure environment to prevent access by unauthorized personnel and card and account information should never be kept on the cardholders' person unless conducting an "over the counter" transaction (purchase) or on travel status (travel). Charge card information shall not be transmitted over a facsimile machine. If it is necessary to electronically transmit government credit card numbers or other financial account information it must be transmitted through a secured site and/or sent as an encrypted attachment.



Conference Registration: Using the Purchase vs. Travel Card

DOC's purchase card policy prohibits any travel or fleet related items from being purchased using the purchase card. However, cardholders have been faced with a dilemma, "Which card do I use to register for a conference?" So...per your request, here are the rules (as applicable to DOC):

If conference registration includes meals and lodging in the registration fee DOC's policy is that the registration cannot be placed using the purchase card. In these instances, cardholders are required to use their travel cards.

However, if an individual does not have a travel card, then the purchase card can be used to pay for conference registration fees when meals are included *only if*:

1. Conference is **not** government sponsored
2. Meals **cannot** be separated from the registration fee
3. Department has determined that it is essential for employees to attend

This policy update will be reflected in the next iteration of the Travel Handbook.



If you have additional questions regarding this policy, you should speak with your bureau agency program coordinator.

How to access the APC OMB Max Website

The APC OMB Max website is an online resource primarily for APCs to obtain information regarding the Department's charge card programs: Federal and DOC policies; program expenditure trends, as well as bureau contact information.



If you have an account with OMB Max, to access the page:

1. Go to the following link: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/11EtjQ>
2. Log into your account
3. The link will take you directly to the APC page. From there you will need to click on the "Purchase" tab for Purchase Card related resources.

If you do not have an OMB Max account, you will need to:

1. Go to the OMB Max Homepage: <https://max.omb.gov/maxportal/home.do>
2. Establish a user name and password using your DOC email account.
3. Once you have registered, go to link at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/11EtjQ>

The Green Store: Free Office Supplies!

As part of the Department's ongoing commitment to both environmental and financial stewardship the Green Store (located in the Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB - 14th Street, NW) operates under the concept that excess office supplies can be re-used by other offices. All office supplies are free to all Commerce offices within HCHB and offices are encouraged

to donate their excess supplies to the Green Store. Volunteers from HCHB's Green Team and local high school student interns operate the store. Contributions to the Green Store are accepted anytime in room 2064, Office of Sustainable Energy and Environmental Programs. For additional information, please contact Rosaline Hill at rhill9@doc.gov or 482-5949.





A spotlight on...

Convenience Checks

Convenience checks should be used as a payment method of last resort only when no reasonable alternative merchant is available. Convenience checks are intended only for use with merchants that do not accept purchase cards, for emergency incident response, and for other Agency approved purposes that comply with Public Law 104-134, the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996.

Convenience Check Restrictions:

Check writers are prohibited from issuing checks to DOC employees (including themselves) as well as for any of the following:

- ◆ Vendors who accept the purchase card;
- ◆ Cash advances or re-imbursement purposes;
- ◆ Salary payment or cash awards, or any transaction required to be processed through the payroll system;
- ◆ Employee reimbursements;
- ◆ Travel-related tickets or expenditures, including meals, lodging and rental or lease of vehicles;
- ◆ Advance payments to vendors;
- ◆ Hazardous materials;
- ◆ Honorarium fee to a non-US citizen or permanent resident alien not authorized to receive this payment in accordance with the terms and conditions of their visa;
- ◆ On-the-spot awards; or
- ◆ Incentive awards to contractors or contract employees.

[Reference: CAM 1313.301, Section 4, May 2012]

Contributions

APC Digest is a quarterly distribution to keep the DOC Charge Card community connected with program enhancements, policy updates, and best practices. If you have information that you would like to have incorporated in the newsletter, please send an email to PurchaseCardOversight@doc.gov.