



AFSA Guidance for Foreign Service Employees

MONEY

1. Save your vouchers and all records of financial transactions for at least ten years. “Of course I paid that!” isn’t enough. Accounts can be audited many years later; you may be asked to produce receipts or vouchers.
2. READ your travel orders, and question what you don’t understand. Do not deviate from authorized travel routes unless you fully understand what “cost-construct” means. You are responsible for any additional charges. Contract fares cannot be used for deviations from the authorized itinerary.
3. Use your USG-issued credit card only for official purposes and pay off your bill each month. You may be suspended without pay for up to 5 days for infractions.
4. It may be difficult/impossible to terminate without penalty your cellphone or other contracts when you are posted overseas. Commercial companies are required by law to waive early termination fees for members of the military – but not for civilian government employees. Some employees have found pay-as-you-go plans to be a useful alternative.

BIDDING

1. Don’t bid on a job unless you are ready to take it.
2. Your EERs may get you promoted, but it’s your corridor reputation that gets you jobs.
3. If you are interested in bidding on a critical human threat post, make sure your security clearance has been updated. Be aware that the presence of close relatives (of you or your spouse) in-country may prevent your assignment.

EERS

1. It is better to negotiate the wording of your EER now than to grieve it later. AFSA can help to suggest alternate wording and negotiating strategies with your rater/reviewer.
2. The “Area for Improvement” matters in a system where 2% of all employees must be low-ranked. Pay attention, and avoid repeat documentation of the same problem areas.
3. Take great care with your Rated Employee’s Statement. Remember that if you yourself wrote it, it may be difficult to grieve it!

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

1. Contact AFSA *before* any interview with DS or OIG. We can determine if you are merely a witness or the subject of the investigation, and whether it is potentially criminal in nature. Make sure DS or the OIG advises you in writing of your rights before you begin answering their questions. You have a right to a union representative and/or counsel present during the interview, and you should exercise it. Many employees approach interviews casually, assuming they can “explain away” potential problems. They later regret that initial relaxed approach.
2. Remember that your blogs, Facebook posts, and even personal e-mails can reach wide audiences. Severe disciplinary actions or security investigations can be, and have been, initiated because of employees’ “private” writings. See AFSA’s recent guidance on the “Use of Social Media” under “Member Guidance” on our website (www.afsa.org)
3. Remember that your personal life may affect your security clearance and continued suitability for employment. This is particularly true if you are serving overseas. Avoid behavior that casts you in a negative light or could potentially subject you to blackmail, coercion or undue influence.
4. Find out who your AFSA post representative is. If there is no rep at post, consider volunteering!