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TRAVEL CHARGE CARD DELINQUENCIES

Management of Travel Charge Cards was one of the Coast Guard's recent success stories this past year and a leading example within the Department. Unfortunately, we have slipped backwards considerably the past few months and this program needs your prompt attention. After experiencing delinquency rates below or just above our objective goal of 1% for a 5 month period, we have now seen a steady increase back to a year-long high of 3.63% for the month of January. Also, GSA is now mandating a 2% absolute delinquency ceiling based on a recent change to the government-wide travel charge card contract. Our inability to remain within the established ceiling has been brought to the attention of the Department's CFO by our travel charge card vendor in writing. Something we do not want to see repeated. Remaining below 1% is a realistic goal as we demonstrated for much of FY05. To become delinquent with balances greater than 60 days means that the travel charge card bill has not been paid for three months in a row. There is no excuse for an individual to be delinquent given the adequate information and monitoring tools in direct access and with travel charge card coordinators monitoring each unit's account status. Individuals also have the ability for rapid payment of travel claims and online bill payment capability with the travel charge card vendor.

ALCOAST 607/05 released in December 2005 directed units to report the reason members were delinquent, steps taken to clear the debt, and steps to ensure that it does not recur. Most units have complied with this directive but we need everyone's attention to this matter to ensure we eliminate our delinquent travel card holders. One of the prevailing excuses we have heard for delinquencies has been problems with the new UTS/TPAX software. While this new software required users to learn a new format and means for inputting travel data, by no means should this have caused members to be 120 days late in paying their accounts. Our standard for filing of travel claims is within three days of returning from travel. PSC has a dedicated Help Desk to assist members with the new UTS/TPAX software and paper travel claims can always be submitted by members in order to remain timely with their account. The key is timely filing of the voucher and follow-up by the chain of command on the filing requirement and travel charge card balances using Direct Access. The travel charge card data is updated weekly in Direct Access. If charges or payments are made, they will be reflected in the balances in Direct Access. Chronic outstanding charge card balances should be detected and acted upon by the chain of command in advance before they become three months passed due. If UTS/TPAX training is needed, the PSC web site contains tutorials and PSC can be contacted to arrange additional unit funded training. ALCOAST 381/04 directed commands to use these tools to monitor travel charge card activity. ALCOAST 264/04 provides several other methods to monitor compliance with the travel charge card program, file vouchers timely and to deal with long-term and frequent TAD issues.

Accountability for compliance with processes and procedures and leadership from senior levels to the deck plates are the areas where we need command attention and diligence to help remedy our current trend. A high delinquency rate reflects poorly on our stewardship. We have been the benchmark for the Department and the entire government for most of this past year, and we should continue to do so. It is the

responsibility of commanding officers and supervisors to monitor their members travel charge card balances to ensure that they are kept current. Early involvement when accounts first become past due and a continual internal focus at the unit level is the best means to avoid delinquencies.

Regards,

RADM Kenneth J. Venuto
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