You will travel through at least one foreign country en route to Antarctica, and once there you will be living in a region that does not provide many modern conveniences. Planning ahead is essential and will contribute greatly to your effectiveness and comfort. You will require a passport and you will have to pass physical and dental examinations. Please read the following information carefully. Your supervisor, science team leader or ASC point of contact will answer any additional questions you may have.

**Medical and Dental Examinations**

You must pass rigorous medical and dental examinations before going to the Antarctic.

Antarctica is an extreme, remote environment, and medical facilities are limited. U.S. Antarctic Program facilities are equipped and staffed to provide routine ambulatory care that would be expected in a U.S. clinic, and have the capability to stabilize and manage a range of emergency medical and dental conditions before transporting patients off the continent. However, medical evacuations take a lot of time and effort and place others at risk, even when the weather allows travel. Remote field camps and research vessels pose additional difficulties. Therefore, the physical qualification (PQ) process administered by ASC seeks to screen out people with conditions that cannot effectively be managed on the Ice or aboard ship.

This PQ process applies to all grantees, ASC employees, contractors, military personnel or guests of the NSF. Members of another nation’s Antarctic program may be cleared through their country, but must provide ASC with their country’s/program’s clearance documentation, and carry a copy of their medical records with them if they are to be stationed near and supported by U.S. medical facilities. A resident of a nation that does not have an Antarctic field program will be required to pass the U.S. Antarctic Program screening program. The U.S. Antarctic Program also maintains reciprocity with the U.S. Arctic Program.
Deployment clearance begins when ASC is notified that you are a candidate to deploy to Antarctica, either through the Support Information Package (SIP) for grantees, hiring paperwork for contract employees, or other documents. The medical department is located at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston, Texas. Upon authorization, UTMB sends each candidate an e-mail with information on how to access medical forms and instructions online.

Please note that the physical qualification process frequently changes as new information on risks or treatment options arise. You should only obtain the tests required in your packet. The U.S. Antarctic Program will not pay for ANY testing performed outside of those requested in your packet.

Please read all of the instructions. The information in the packet will answer most questions about how to schedule needed exams and return the completed information back to UTMB. If you have further questions, or special circumstances, please contact your POC. Contact information for UTMB is included in your deployment packet.

ASC Employees: If participants have their own insurance, they should submit expenses to their insurance first. ASC will reimburse the participant for approved out-of-pocket expenses. Receipts must be submitted to the particular teammate (e.g., PAE, GSC) hiring them.

Grantees may pay for their physical and dental examinations from their NSF grant. Work with your principal investigator (PI) for procedures. NSF funding cannot be used for medical or dental treatment that may be required to meet physical qualifications requirements established for the U.S. Antarctic Program.

NOTE: Treatments to resolve dental conditions or other items required to meet U.S. Antarctic Program screening criteria are not reimbursable. Please check with your health coverage or UTMB before scheduling exams or additional work that is not listed on your original checklist.

You will mail the completed documentation to UTMB. If your providers have questions concerning the deployment exam, required labs and/or tests, direct them to the Dear Doctor and Dear Dentist letters in the packet for detailed instructions.

Candidates are responsible for scheduling their examinations early to ensure that complete information is provided to ASC no less than eight weeks prior to their planned departure for Antarctica. You should start the process as early as possible in case additional testing is required for your clearance. Ensure that all contacts at UTMB and ASC know how to contact you at all times (phone and/or e-mail) should additional information be required.

In addition to medical paperwork there will be additional documents which must be submitted to ASC. Passing the physical examinations mean you are PQ’d. You will not be ticketed to travel to Antarctica until all required documents have been returned to ASC. Ticket information is normally sent two weeks before your departure date. The best rule is to submit your information as early as possible to allow time for problems or re-testing. Always keep copies of paperwork submitted for your own files.

While a PQ is valid for 12 months, the physician reviewer may require additional information to maintain PQ status. For example, someone who originally PQs for a summer season may be offered a winter position once deployed, which will require additional testing.

All medical information, laboratory results, X-rays, dental exams, releases, and personal information forms are the property of the U.S. Antarctic Program, and will not be returned to candidates. Make copies of all the paperwork for your own files.

Waivers. Candidates who do not meet U.S. Antarctic Program criteria and are determined “Not Physically Qualified” (NPQ’d) may request a waiver for NSF review of their condition. UTMB will send out information on how to apply for a waiver with your NPQ document. Be aware that additional testing or treatment needed for a waiver will not be reimbursable. Also note that the waiver process can take up to eight weeks for completion.
Immunizations

All participants must have had a tetanus vaccination current within the last 10 years and an annual seasonal influenza vaccine (available in late September) prior to deployment. Proof of vaccination status for measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) and pertussis is also required. Other vaccinations may also be required. A pneumovax for participants who are age 64 or older, or who have special medical conditions, is highly recommended.

If you are planning travel after your deployment, in tropical South America for example, you may need other immunizations. Consult your physician or the Center for Disease Control (CDC) at 800-232-4636 or at www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx for current recommendations on the areas where you plan to travel.

If vaccinations or medications (e.g., malaria chemoprophylaxis) are required prior to your travel, you must purchase them before leaving home and take them to the clinic upon arrival on station. The vaccination will be administered to you at the end of the season.

No immunizations are required for return to the United States. Under international health regulations, other countries may require international certificates of vaccination against yellow fever.

More information on health considerations is covered in Chapter 6.

Privacy Act Compliance

All medical information gathered from you by the NSF or its contractor is maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579).

NSF’s authority to collect medical, dental, and psychological information is derived from its authority to prescribe rules governing its operations as set forth in section 1870(a) of title 42 of the U.S. Code. If you do not provide the information requested, you may be disqualified from the U.S. Antarctic Program.

Deployment Paperwork

Grantees and ASC: Once you have been identified as a USAP participant (or alternate participant), you will receive an email containing a link to the Deployment Packet. It will be sent a few weeks after you have received the PQ email. Please review this paperwork carefully. It includes information you need to know before you get to Antarctica and the forms (e.g. airport of departure, passport information and clothing sizes) you’ll need to fill out and return to ASC Travel before your airline ticket can be issued.

Travel Arrangements

ASC Travel begins work on your ticketing and itinerary early in the qualifying process. You may be consulted in advance to establish your deployment date, but your itinerary and tickets will not be released to you until you have turned in all paperwork.

You will travel through New Zealand, Chile, or other countries en route to Antarctica, using airline tickets provided by the U.S. Antarctic Program.

The International Air Transportation Fair Competitive Practices Act of 1974 (better known as the Fly America Act) requires the use of U.S. carriers (coach class) whenever available when ASC is the ticket buyer. ASC Travel reserves, purchases, and issues your tickets for direct air travel from your home airport to New Zealand or Chile. This information is taken directly from the travel paperwork submitted by you. Any deviation from the direct route must be authorized in advance by the NSF program manager or ASC management. To get the best fare, airline tickets are purchased at least three weeks in advance.

When the ticket information is sent to you, make sure the date and time of travel are what you expected. Make sure the name printed on your tickets corresponds to the one in your passport (i.e., no nicknames). If your tickets have discrepancies, contact ASC Travel.
Every effort is made to obtain flight dates as requested, but this is not always possible. Remember that during the southbound trans-Pacific flight you cross the International Date Line, losing a day. For example, if you leave the United States on a Tuesday, you will arrive in New Zealand on Thursday.

Your Airport of Departure (AOD) is the location you designate as your residence on either the SIP or your deployment paperwork, and is the city to which you will be returned. You will not be able to change your AOD once your tickets have been issued. The only exception would be proof of a change of residence that occurred during your deployment and approved prior to re-deployment by ASC management.

**Expenses**

**Grantees:** Your PI or team leader can give you information on what expenses are covered by your grant and any special training or meetings that may be required.

**ASC Employees:** Contact your company’s HR/Finance department with any questions regarding expense reimbursement prior to deployment. Take any previously unreimbursed expense receipts with you to Antarctica, as you will be able to complete expense reimbursement there. Your particular employer will advise if anything additional is required.

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**PASSENGERS, VISAS AND PERMITS**

**Passports**

You must have a valid passport before leaving the United States. Obtaining a passport is your responsibility, and typically takes at least six weeks. To apply for a passport, you must present two photos and a certified copy of your birth certificate to a Department of State Passport Office. Information can be found at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

If you are a federal employee, your agency must obtain an Official passport by contacting the Department of State. **Bearers of official passports require visas in some countries that may not require visas of regular passport bearers.**

If you already have a passport, make sure that it is not scheduled to expire during your overseas stay. **Your passport must be valid at least six months beyond your intended stay. This is an airline requirement.**

It is a good idea to keep a photocopy of your passport (including pages containing visas) in a separate place in the event that your passport is lost. Assistance with the replacement of passports lost in New Zealand/Antarctica can be done via the Christchurch Travel Office. **Never risk mailing your passport from Antarctica.**

**Visas**

If you are a **U.S. citizen, you do not need a visa** for New Zealand, Chile, or while transiting through Australian airports.

If you do not hold a U.S. passport you might require a visa to transit through countries entered on route to Antarctica. Any necessary visas should be obtained at least eight weeks before deployment by contacting the embassies of the countries to be visited. Failure to do so could delay or even prevent your deployment.

The requirements of the four countries through which most U.S. Antarctic Program travelers pass are explained below. Any **necessary visas should be obtained before leaving the United States** by contacting the embassies of the countries to be visited. Failure to do so may complicate or delay your travel. **The U.S. Antarctic Program does not pay for nor provide assistance in obtaining visas.** ASC Travel will not purchase your ticket until visas are obtained. If your New Zealand
or Chilean visa application requires an itinerary and letter of participation in the USAP, please contact ASC Travel, and the required documentation will be provided.

New Zealand. A visitor's permit is required for all holders of U.S. passports and will be issued at the airport upon arrival in New Zealand. The total time spent in both New Zealand and Antarctica is recorded by New Zealand Immigration as time spent in New Zealand.

ASC will provide all ASC-ticketed participants with an official letter requesting a 12-month visitor's permit. When entering New Zealand, you must provide this letter with your passport to the Immigration agent. Failure to do so will provide you with a three-month permit. Do not use the express passport kiosks in the airport as the machines will not provide you with a visitor's permit for an adequate length of time for most deployments to Antarctica. Double-check that you have been given a 12-month visitor's permit before exiting Immigration.

If you plan on traveling in New Zealand after your deployment, you must not let your visa expire. Electronic visa extensions are available for up to three months from INZCHCHExpress@mbie.govt.nz and can be requested before you leave Antarctica. Visas can also be extended at any N.Z. Immigration office, for a fee.

Chile. If you will be traveling on a tourist (private citizen) U.S. passport, you do not need a visa to enter Chile. Bearers of Official passports do need a visa, available from the Chilean Embassy, 1732 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-785-1746). Send a letter stating the purpose of your visit; enclose your passport and a return envelope. For more information, go to www.chile-usa.org.

Argentina. If you will be traveling on a tourist (private citizen) U.S. passport, you do not need a visa to enter Argentina. Bearers of Official passports do need a visa, available from the Argentine Embassy, 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009 (202-238-6460). Send a letter stating the purpose of your visit; enclose your passport and a return envelope. For more information, visit www.embassyofargentina.us.

Australia. USAP participants with a U.S. passport, who have been ticketed by ASC, who are routed through Australia en route to New Zealand, do not need a visa if you are remaining inside the international terminal of the airport.

U.S. passport holders planning leisure travel through Australia do need to obtain a visa in advance. Usually this can be accomplished online, but you may be required to submit an application and send your passport to the Embassy of Australia, 1601 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-797-3000). For more information, visit www.usa.embassy.gov.au.

Sea travel requires a Marine Crew Visa (MCV Class 988). If you are embarking/disembarking a ship in Hobart, the MCV must be obtained before you arrive in Australia. The application can take 5-30 days. ASC Travel can assist in this process.

Visas for non-U.S. citizens. Foreign nationals residing in the United States are responsible for obtaining the appropriate visas from their country before leaving for Antarctica. Contact the embassy of the country through which you will pass to learn requirements. Allow up to eight weeks for the visa to be processed. Remember, no tickets will be purchased before visas are obtained.

If you are not a citizen of the United States, you will need a two-entry visa (one for initial entry and one for return from Antarctica) for New Zealand or for South American countries through which you will pass. It is your responsibility to check with an official of your country well before the planned departure; the U.S. Antarctic Program will not act on your behalf.

Resident aliens in the United States should determine any other regulations that govern absence from the United States by checking with the U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service. Lack of compliance with regulations can cause loss of accrued residence time benefits that are applicable toward citizenship and/or re-entry. It can take several months, and even require a visit to the consulate, for non-U.S. citizens to get these visas.
U.S. visas for foreign nationals. If you are a foreign national not residing in the United States, and will be traveling to the United States after you have been to Antarctica, please review the Department of State Visa Services Internet Information at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for exchange visitor visa and student visa information and requirements.

Permits and Approvals

NSF grantees may need to obtain permits for working with birds or mammals, for transporting samples, for entering protected areas, for introducing non-native species, etc. These permits may be issued by the National Science Foundation (Antarctic Conservation Act permits) or by other U.S. or foreign government agencies. These permits cannot be obtained from Antarctica. Your SIP contains the actual applications and describes what is required and where to file the applications. See Chapter 4 for details on the permitting process.

Diving qualifications. Some science projects in Antarctica require scuba or surface-supplied diving. There are a number of unique risks associated with polar diving, including extreme cold, limited entry/exit points, ice in many forms, potentially dangerous marine life, low light and visibility, contaminated water, and others. Because of these risks, Antarctic diving demands special training, experience and an on-site orientation for divers; proper equipment; and a thorough and realistic dive plan. All diving under NSF auspices in Antarctica requires prior approval from the NSF. To obtain approval, a dive plan must be submitted that is consistent with the [NSF/Polar Programs Standards for the Conduct of Scientific Diving](http://travel.state.gov), available online by clicking on the title here, or from your POC. The PI’s home institution diving safety officer or equivalent must provide comments on and approval of any request to dive in Antarctica. Final authorization will be made by the Division of Polar Program’s diving safety officer or other NSF-designated diving safety officer. Prior to approval, additional training may be required or it may be necessary to change the original dive plan. Dive plan forms and individual diver information sheets are available in the Dive section of [POLAR ICE](http://travel.state.gov), the online application for science and technical support.

A variety of diving equipment, including scuba tanks and backpacks, weight belts and weights, regulators, dive computers, and compressors, among other items, is available at McMurdo and Palmer stations and aboard USAP research vessels. PIs must specifically request the use of any NSF/PLR equipment in their SIP during the preseason planning stage. Recreational diving is not permitted.

Grantees: The [Antarctic Scientific Diving Manual](http://travel.state.gov) (NSF 99-22) contains information on certification, dive sites, environment, operations, emergencies, reference tables, etc. Guidelines for research diving can be found in the [NSF/Polar Programs Standards for the Conduct of Scientific Diving](http://travel.state.gov).

Firearms. The use of firearms is prohibited without advance permission from the Division of Polar Programs. Request permission by letter, stating:

- Purpose of the firearm
- Make and caliber of the firearm
- Type and amount of ammunition

Upon completion of your fieldwork, you must report the disposition of firearms and excess ammunition to the Division of Polar Programs. This information will be reported to the other Antarctic Treaty nations, as required by the Antarctic Treaty.

New Zealand agriculture. Like most nations today, New Zealand has restrictions on what may and may not enter the country. Goods are restricted if they are known to carry pests or diseases that could endanger native plants and animals. Travelers are required to declare all restricted goods when they enter New Zealand. Some examples of restricted goods are dairy products; fish, fruit and vegetables (fresh/dried/frozen/cooked); genetically modified organisms (GMOs); herbs and spices; noodles and rice; nuts; bamboo, cane and basket ware; cut/dried flowers and leaves; seeds; wooden artifacts; camping equipment; feathers, bones, horns and tusks; furs and skins; soil and water; unpro-
cessed wool and animal hair. All restricted items will be examined on arrival, and if found to comply with current requirements, will be permitted to enter. People who knowingly bring restricted items into New Zealand and do not declare them will be prosecuted and will be subject to severe penalties.

Some goods prohibited from entry into New Zealand include honey; eggs and egg products; meat and meat products; unpopped popcorn; plants (live/dried); straw; shells and coral; ivory; turtle and tortoise shells. For more information, visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz.

**CUSTOMS**

Your baggage will be inspected by Customs officers and may be screened by dogs that are specially trained to detect controlled substances and agricultural products including fruits, plants and food. In addition, thorough searches of luggage and individual clothing items, as well as body searches, are routinely conducted by the Customs authorities at the time of entry. Importation and possession of controlled drugs without prescriptions, marijuana, weapons (especially firearms and switchblade knives), pornography, and certain animal/agricultural products are strictly prohibited when entering New Zealand and Chile. Violators will be instantly fined $400NZ or more. Transportation of the above-mentioned items aboard U.S. military ships and airplanes is also prohibited by federal law.

Travelers are able to carry personal effects in their normal luggage. Personal effects are articles a traveler may reasonably require for personal use during the journey such as clothing, footwear, watches, brushes and toiletries. Personal effects can also include jewelry (but not unmounted semi-precious or precious stones). Personal effects also are duty-free items purchased either prior to your departure or upon your arrival; are for your own private use or intended as gifts; are not imported for commercial purposes or for use in your business and/or profession; and are not imported for other persons at their request.

There are limits on quantities of tobacco and alcohol that can be brought into many countries. Please refer to these websites for current customs regulations:

- New Zealand: www.customs.govt.nz
- Chile: www.aduana.cl
- Australia: www.customs.gov.au
- Argentina: http://argentina.visahq.com/customs

In addition to the personal effects concession, each passenger is entitled to the Visitor Concessionary Entry of other items that a visitor normally carries. This includes items such as a laptop computer, cameras and a Smart Phone. These goods must be for personal use, and the goods will be taken with the passenger when he/she leaves the country.

If you plan on carrying any single item worth more than US$1,000 excluding personal items such as laptops and cameras, please indicate that on the Trip Details form in your deployment paperwork you will receive from ASC.

**ASC Employees:** ASC will not provide personal property insurance.

**Grantees and Technical Events:** Grantees and Technical Event personnel should have insurance for project equipment as determined by the PI. The cost of insurance should be included in the budget request.

**Customs and Your Equipment**

If you will be taking or shipping technical equipment to Antarctica through another country, prepare in advance to avoid two possible costs, paying import duty or posting bond to a foreign country (even though your equipment is only passing through) and paying duty when you bring the equipment back into the United States.

Technical equipment includes any valuable items of foreign make (other than the personal effects concession mentioned above), such as scientific equipment or numerous computers or...
professional cameras, which you plan to take with you to Antarctica. If these items are not registered with U.S. Customs or you do not have proof of previous payments for such items, you may have to pay import duties on them upon your return to the United States. You cannot be reimbursed for such costs. Customs regulations also require that prescription drugs be hand-carried and not placed in checked baggage. Carry a copy of each prescription provided by your personal physician. See Chapter 3 for further information on prescription medications.

Scientific or technological equipment (including personal computers, spare parts or other equipment carried for ASC) that you carry as part of your personal luggage is likely to be charged a customs duty and/or tax, or impounded if such a duty or tax is not paid. If you do not have a receipt or the item was a gift, Customs will determine the value. NSF contractor representatives will not cover charges for customs duties or taxes. All scientific or technological equipment should be shipped from the United States and Antarctica as cargo (all cargo is designated NSF and hence is exempt from duty and taxes).

Customs registration must be made in person, and you must possess the articles and serial numbers to be registered. Registration can be made at any international airport in the United States that originates overseas flights (e.g., Los Angeles or Miami). Also, Coastal Customs Registration Centers are located in the World Trade Center, Los Angeles.

It is suggested that you prepare a list of items (with serial numbers and/or appropriate documentation) prior to your arrival at the registration center. This information can then be easily transcribed to the customs registration forms available only at the centers.

There are several methods of protecting against payment of unwarranted duty:

**Registry with U.S. Customs.** To ease re-entry and before leaving the United States, you can register equipment such as cameras with U.S. Customs by completing U.S. Customs Form 4457. Contact Customs at any U.S. international airport.

**Letter from your institution.** When carrying science equipment as accompanied baggage, list it on your institution’s stationery and include a statement that the material will be used for research at a U.S. government Antarctic station. Keep the list with the material to ease clearance through Customs in Argentina and Chile. This letter is not enough when going through New Zealand.

**Temporary importation of your equipment into New Zealand.** There is a customs law for nonmilitary U.S. Antarctic Program participants entering New Zealand. Grantees, contractors and other visitors carrying high-tech and scientific equipment (not including laptop computers) as part of their luggage must carry a New Zealand Customs form stating (1) that the goods will not be left, sold or disposed of in New Zealand without the written permission of New Zealand Customs, (2) that the goods listed will be finally exported from New Zealand within 12 months of their first landing, and (3) a list of the equipment and its value. Appropriate forms must be obtained from ASC Travel in Denver before you depart for New Zealand and must be returned to ASC Travel upon return to your home institution.

**NOTE:** Technical event participants fall into a special category. Contact ASC Travel.

**Carnet de Passage.** Visitors from the media and other organizations are not issued NSF letters for their professional equipment. To avoid paying the customs duty, anyone carrying professional equipment including cameras and other recording devices must have a carnet. NSF representatives will not help you get a carnet and will not pay customs duty for you.

If you have a carnet, you do not also need to register items with U.S. Customs. Obtain the Carnet de Passage for Temporary Admission before you leave for Antarctica. In the United States, the U.S. Treasury has appointed the U.S. Council for International Business to issue carnets: [www.uscib.org/ata-carnet-export-service-ud-718](http://www.uscib.org/ata-carnet-export-service-ud-718)
PERSONAL MATTERS

Before you leave for Antarctica, take care of your personal affairs. Designate someone you trust as your stateside representative. It can be difficult to handle financial or other personal affairs from Antarctica. Because mail delivery to Antarctica is not always reliable or timely, you should NOT forward your mail or change your address to Antarctica. You will be able to communicate with your stateside representative by telephone and e-mail.

**Personal Finances**

Take enough money with you to meet all eventualities. Most foreign banks will not cash personal checks or cashier checks drawn on your home bank. NSF representatives in New Zealand will not advance funds nor will they accept a personal check.

**NOTE:** Make sure that your ATM and credit cards do not expire while you are away from home.

International credit cards (e.g., MasterCard, Visa) are generally accepted in New Zealand and South American countries.

You should plan to have a minimum of $500 available for your trip to Antarctica. This amount will vary with personal spending habits, length of stay and travel delays. Ensure you plan for the purchase of personal items (soap, toothpaste, souvenirs, etc.) in Antarctica. There is an ATM at McMurdo Station, but none at the other Antarctic stations or onboard the research vessels.

**Banking in New Zealand.** Banks in New Zealand will exchange U.S. cash and travelers checks into New Zealand currency. You can also withdraw funds from banks using your Visa and Mastercard credit cards, if you have previously established a Personal Identification Number (PIN) with your bank. ATMs marked with ‘Plus’ or ‘Cirrus’ accept credit cards (with a PIN) as well as ATM and debit cards, and are located in both the Auckland and Christchurch airports.

**Banking in Chile.** In Santiago, money exchange is available only in the international terminal (not the domestic terminal). There are ATMs located throughout the airport terminal, but be aware that on occasion there will not be time to exchange money upon your arrival and before your departure. However, U.S. currency can be used for taxes and fees (see Chapter 5 for more information). Banks in Punta Arenas, Chile, are closed half of Saturday and all of Sunday, so plan accordingly. There are ample ATMs throughout Punta Arenas. ATMs marked with ‘Plus’ or ‘Cirrus’ accept credit cards (with a PIN) as well as ATM and debit cards.

Palmer is 100% cashless. Bring a credit or debit card. They do not accept cash or checks.

**Joint bank accounts and debt payments.** If you will need to draw funds from a bank account while you are in Antarctica, you may wish to have the account established jointly with another person to permit the other person to withdraw the funds as required. The joint tenant of the account can legally withdraw any and all funds whenever he/she wants.

Arrange for the regular payment of insurance premiums and any other term debts that you may have while in Antarctica.

Mail service from Antarctica during the winter is limited and it is not available at all from South Pole during the austral winter. It is erratic during the summer season. You are advised not to rely on the mail service to pay bills from Antarctica (see Postal Services in Chapter 6). South Pole’s winter is February to November.

**Absence ballot.** If you wish to vote in any local, state or federal elections by absentee ballot, you must arrange to receive an absentee ballot from your voting authorities. Keep in mind the uncertainties of mail in and out of Antarctica. Voting regulations are updated frequently and the most current information for U.S. citizens interested in voting from an overseas location can be found at [https://www.fvap.gov](https://www.fvap.gov). Be sure to check absentee voting requirements of your home precinct before you leave for Antarctica.
Income Tax

It is each participant's responsibility to ensure their U.S. taxes are filed each year. For federal income tax returns, due April 15, you may request an extension for filing from the district director of the Internal Revenue Service. However, interest is charged on the unpaid balance of your tax beginning April 15.

You can file your income taxes online or give someone a limited or special power of attorney to act as your agent in filing your income tax returns (federal, state and local). IRS district directors have forms for this purpose, or you may have a lawyer draw up the document. Remember that if your agent fails to file the return, you are still the one who has to pay the delinquent tax penalty.

The IRS does not consider Antarctica extraterritorial, so U.S. tax law applies. For further information, you can contact the IRS. District directors are in each state at the same address where you normally file tax returns. For more information, go to www.irs.gov.

ASC Employees: Federal and state income taxes are withheld from all ASC employee paychecks.

Power of Attorney

You may wish to establish a general or a special power of attorney before leaving home. A general power of attorney permits your agent to act for you in ordinary business and commercial transactions: to endorse and write checks, to sign documents and bills of sale on your behalf, and so forth. A special power of attorney restricts the agent's authority to functions specifically described. For example, you might empower your agent only to sell a particular piece of property for not less than a stated price.

Some institutions, such as savings banks, may not accept a power of attorney document. They may require you to make special arrangements with them before others may withdraw your funds. Individuals may be reluctant to communicate with your agent under a general power of attorney if the authority for a particular transaction is not specifically set forth, or if your agent's authority is otherwise in doubt. Consult a lawyer before drafting a power of attorney. A power of attorney automatically expires at the time of your death and defers to information contained in your will.

Wills

A will ensures distribution of your estate as you desire and not arbitrarily, as state laws require if there is no will. You are urged to consider having one prepared before you deploy to Antarctica.

Notary Services

No universally recognized notary services are available in Antarctica. Therefore, you cannot count on being able to execute or revoke legal documents requiring notarization. Settle outstanding legal matters before you leave for Antarctica.

Insurance

Notification of Injuries and Evacuations. If you are injured while working in Antarctica or if you are taken to New Zealand or South America for a medical consultation or evacuation, the U.S. Antarctic Program management will not notify your family of the injury if you are physically capable of contacting your family members on your own. In the event you are physically unable to notify your family members, U.S. Antarctic Program management will contact your emergency contact (not necessarily at your request).

Personal property and cargo insurance. A loss of personal property in Antarctica through fire, theft, or any other means should be protected by individual personal property insurance. It is your responsibility to obtain this coverage. The U.S. government normally does not assume liability for damage to or loss of personal property unless there is clear evidence of negligence.
by government personnel acting in the scope of their employment. Although every effort is made to care for cargo (personal or scientific), the U.S. Antarctic Program is not responsible for any damage that may occur.

**Grantees:** Make sure you have adequate insurance for your stay in Antarctica. An NSF grant for work in Antarctica does not provide insurance coverage. Check with your employer or a financial consultant to find out what insurance you have and to decide what you should have. Consider the following areas:

**Health insurance.** Although medical personnel are available at each U.S. Antarctic station, the medical clinics are for urgent care and emergent needs only. They are not to be considered your primary care physician. You will be responsible for costs of hospitalization, medical care, laboratory fees, and any other charges incurred outside of Antarctica. Before leaving the United States, examine your health coverage and buy insurance if you need it. **Grantees are asked to read Appendix D on page 85 regarding medical insurance.**

**Worker's Compensation.** If you will be working for a PI as a volunteer, remember that worker's compensation coverage may not be provided.

**Life insurance.** Grantees and their team members are urged to have adequate life insurance. Federal employees’ Civil Service policies remain in effect during Antarctic duty. Examine your insurance coverage before departure to ensure you are adequately covered. The NSF does not provide life insurance for its grantees in Antarctica. In making arrangements for insurance, keep in mind that Antarctic flights are generally considered non-scheduled military airplane operations. Check with your institution to see whether its group policies for employees provide coverage or exceptions for travel and work in remote regions.

**Travel insurance.** Some insurance companies offer air travel insurance for scheduled commercial and Air Mobility Command flights. This insurance is available at most commercial airports and Air Mobility Command terminals. It generally does not cover you during flights to Antarctica or during flights in Antarctica.

**Grantees** should have insurance for project equipment as determined by the PI. The costs of insurance should be included in the budget request.

**ASC Employees:** Employees may be eligible to enroll annually in various insurance options offered by their employer (e.g., PAE, GSC).

If you are required to leave Antarctica for medical treatment, as approved by the ASC Medical organization, you are responsible for your medical bills unless the injury or illness is deemed work-related.

**Worker’s Compensation.** Any ASC employee who is injured while in Antarctica may be covered by worker’s compensation. Within one day of the incident (regardless of the severity), a Medical Report Form must be completed by the medical staff and turned in to the designated person at the station or vessel. If you feel you will need treatment after redeployment from Antarctica, you should contact Human Resources prior to leaving Antarctica or prior to debarking a vessel in order to establish a claim. If the injury can’t be treated on station or on the vessel (as determined by ASC Medical), you may be transported off the continent/vessel to be evaluated by another doctor in Christchurch, New Zealand, or Punta Arenas, Chile. Keep in mind that worker’s compensation covers only injuries. Note that medical issues that are pre-existing or are not work-related in nature (e.g., appendicitis, kidney stones) are not covered by worker’s compensation. Your insurance policy through your employer or insurance through an outside carrier may cover different conditions.

**NOTE:** It is highly recommended that each employee carry some kind of medical insurance that will provide coverage while traveling out of the country after deployment. If you have enrolled in your employer’s medical insurance, COBRA will be available upon completion of your contract. If medical insurance was not elected, COBRA will not be available.
Cash, Meals and Lodging in Antarctica

The U.S. Antarctic Program stations and vessels use U.S. currency.

An ATM is available at McMurdo Station, but not at South Pole or Palmer stations. The ATM is a Wells Fargo bank ATM, so customers of other banks may incur a charge from their bank and/or Wells Fargo.

South Pole grantees must bring sufficient cash to last the duration of their time at Pole. ASC participants working at Pole may elect to receive a portion of each paycheck in cash (e.g. $100).

Palmer Station is 100% cashless.

Credit cards may be used at McMurdo and Palmer stations for purchases. Credit cards cannot be used at South Pole Station.

No checks may be cashed at any USAP station.

Meals and lodging. Meals and lodging are provided to participants at all U.S. Antarctic Program stations, aboard the research vessels Laurence M. Gould and Nathaniel B. Palmer, and in all field camps. If you are traveling with foreign expeditions, be prepared to pay meal charges aboard their ships.

Paychecks

Paychecks are not sent to Antarctica. All employees are required to have a U.S. bank account for the electronic direct deposit of payroll funds. ASC employees should refer to the paperwork received from their employer for detailed information about travel funds, marine compensation, etc.

In Antarctica, the work week is 54 hours, nine hours per day, Monday through Saturday. Aboard the research vessels, the work week is 84 hours, 12 hours per day, Monday through Sunday. At times, everyone may be expected to work more hours, assist others in the performance of their duties, and/or assume community-related job responsibilities such as washing dishes or cleaning the bathrooms. Due to the challenges of working in Antarctica, no guarantee can be made regarding the duties, location or duration of work. The objective is to support science, maintain the station, and ensure the well-being of all station personnel.