

Matagorda County Travel Policy

County Employees, Officials or Department Heads, traveling on official county business, will be reimbursed for such travel upon submitting the appropriate documentation and travel expense report to the County Auditor. All travel requests, whether in advance or as a reimbursement must be approved by the department head or official before submitting to the County Auditor. To the extent that departmental budgets provide funding, the following guidelines will be applied:

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR FEES

Conference registration should be requested in advance to allow the county to pay the fee directly to the sponsor of the seminar/conference. If this is not possible, a copy of the Registration and original receipt showing the employee's payment must be submitted with a request for reimbursement.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

The county will reimburse for the use of a personal auto at the per mile rate set by the Internal Revenue Service using the shortest route to and from his/her destination. When two or more employees travel in the same vehicle, only one may claim mileage reimbursement. This provision, however, shall not preclude any employee from receiving reimbursement for other eligible expenses incurred. Mileage will be calculated from the Texas Mileage Guide for frequently traveled cities. Additional mileage must be explained and may be approved up to 10% over the allowed.

The county will reimburse for actual expenses on travel by air, bus or train at the lowest possible rates. The passenger's copy of the original ticket for travel must be submitted with the travel reimbursement request. Tickets can be paid for in advance from a travel agency invoice.

In the event a personal vehicle is not available for travel, the county will reimburse for a rental vehicle at the best rate for a mid-size vehicle. This rental must have department head approval prior to the obligation.

Travel allowances are approved by Commissioners Court for the County Judge in lieu of mileage reimbursement. Travel allowance is regarded as income to an employee. The employee is responsible for reporting income received from travel allowances to the Internal Revenue Service. Travel allowance amounts are budgeted and set by Commissioners Court on an annual basis.

MEALS

County employees may receive a per diem allowance for meals of \$20.00 when out of the county for less than a full day. A "full day" in the context of this policy is defined as travel departure before 7:00 a.m. and travel return after 7:00 p.m. Any full day(s) will be reimbursed at \$38.00 per day. No receipts will be required. Tips shall be included as part of the approved allowance.

Reimbursements for meals for travel that does not include an overnight stay will be reimbursed on the employee's next paycheck. These meals are taxable as wages to the employee because travel must be away from home overnight to be excludable per Internal Revenue Service regulations.

An employee who receives a per diem advance must immediately reimburse the County if he or she does not attend the conference or meeting.

Officials and Department heads only, with written justification, may request reimbursement for meal expenses for a guest(s) if such expenses are strictly associated with county business.

LODGING

Payment for lodging may be requested in advance. Employee must attach adequate information, including number of nights and room rates with taxes, and submit the request timely to allow for processing through accounts payable.

The maximum reimbursement for hotel accommodations for room rate will be \$100.00 per night. This maximum does not apply to pre-scheduled conferences which offer a host hotel at a slightly higher rate than \$100.00. Employees are required to book reservations at a host hotel, when available. A "host hotel" is the hotel or hotels specifically designated for lodging by the association hosting or coordinating the conference. If there is not a recommended host hotel and the employee can submit justification for going over the maximum, which includes three (3) lowest estimates of similar accommodations, the court will consider the exception. The original hotel bill must be attached to receive reimbursement.

NOTE: When making reservations for travel to conferences, seminars and meetings always request the Government Rate when available.

Personal telephone calls will not be reimbursed but reasonable documented calls to home or office will be approved. Movie, laundry and alcoholic beverage charges will not be allowed.

It shall be the responsibility of each Official and Department Head to see to the strict enforcement of this policy. By signing the travel reimbursement report, the Official or Department head is certifying that the travel for which reimbursement is being sought was properly authorized and the report and accompanying receipts have been examined and are reasonable.

INCIDENTAL EXPENSES

Employees or officials shall be reimbursed for the actual cost of the following incidental expense incurred during official travel:

- Parking fees
- Toll charges
- Transportation costs

EXPENSE REPORT

All employees and officials filing an expense report shall do so within 30 days after the last date of travel. The expense report must be filled out, accompanied by the pertinent receipts, and signed by the department head. Reports are to be turned into the Auditor's Office.

OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

All out-of-state (with the exception of emergencies) travel shall be approved in advance by Commissioner's Court.

VIOLATION OF POLICY

Employees who willfully violate the county's travel policy are subject to discipline up to and including termination.