

7 TRAVEL EXPENSES

7.1 Policy

- A. All employees and the members of the City Council and the Mayor are required to follow and comply with the following regulations and limitations concerning City travel.
- B. Employees will be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary travel expenses that are directly related to the performance of their assigned duties and which are properly authorized.
- C. To obtain reimbursement, employees must submit an expense report on a City Travel Authorization/Reimbursement Form and substantiate the amounts claimed as required below.
- D. The City will not reimburse or otherwise pay any expense that violates commonly accepted standards of sound judgment and good taste.
- E. Reimbursement shall be made only for expenses actually incurred, paid, and authorized under this policy and procedure.
- F. If an employee carries a City credit card, he/she may use it for travel expenses only to the extent allowed by this policy (i.e., actual cost for lodging) unless authorized in advance by the City Manager, City credit cards may not be used for meals, except for meals where per diem is not collected and the amount of the meals does not exceed the per diem amount. Detailed itemized credit card receipts must be retained to substantiate claimed expense.
- G. Travel authorizations for a total of not more than \$250.00 and not requesting an advance may be approved by an employee's Department Head. Upon return from travel, a completed Travel Authorization/Reimbursement form must be submitted to the Finance Department. All travel authorizations for more than \$250.00 must be approved in advance of travel by the Department Head and the Finance Director, if applicable, as well as the City Manager.
- H. Mayor or City Council travel will be reviewed by the Finance Director to determine compliance with this policy and availability of funds, including specific allocations to each elected official made during the budget process and approved by the City Manager. Elected official's travel budget allocation for that elected official must be approved by the City Council.
- I. Employees attending meetings within 100 miles of the City of Mesquite are not authorized to charge the City of Mesquite any per diem or lodging expense for the day before, if the meeting begins at or after 9:00 a.m. If travel is within 100 miles of the City of Mesquite lodging expense will only be paid with prior approval of the City Manager.
- J. By submitting and signing a travel authorization or travel voucher, the traveling individual represents that the information contained therein is accurate and truthful. Any changes will be initialed before any check is issued.

7.2. Allowances

7.2.1 Mileage

The City will make a City vehicle available for official use to employees when business travel within the City of Mesquite is required between two or more job sites. If a personal vehicle is used at the option of the employee when a City vehicle is available for business travel, no mileage reimbursement is authorized. Mileage reimbursement will be provided to an employee who is required to travel between two or more job sites within the City and no City vehicle is available for such travel. For out of town travel, if there are no City vehicles available and the employee must use a personal vehicle, mileage will be reimbursed at the standard mileage rate as established each year by the Internal Revenue Service for reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle for business purposes. If an employee drives a personal vehicle when commercial air travel would be less expensive, the mileage reimbursement will be limited to the combined cost of the airfare, rental car expenses, airport parking cost and other cost that would be associated with air travel for the intended trip. Additionally, if additional time is required to drive when commercial air travel is available, that additional time will be considered employee's personal time.

7.2.2 Car Allowance

Elected officials and certain employees pursuant to employment agreements receive a car allowance. In instances where staff or elected officials receive a car allowance mileage reimbursement will not be awarded for local or business travel within fifty (50) miles of Mesquite. If a business destination is more than fifty (50) miles distant from Mesquite the traveler will be reimbursed for mileage pursuant to 7.2.1 above for all miles. Effective with the adoption of this policy any individual employment agreement with different terms will be implicitly updated to the terms of this section and the employee will immediately qualify for the updated car allowance.

7.2.3 Insurance

Employee using personal car for City business must submit valid proof of insurance on an annual basis to the Personnel Department.

7.2.4 Lodging

Moderate cost lodging should be arranged at the meeting/training site when possible. If moderately priced rooms are not available at the meeting/training site, then a moderately priced room near the meeting/training site should be obtained. Reimbursement will be based on the cost of a single room, plus tax, if available. Any additional cost for spouse or family must be deducted from the employee's travel advance and reimbursement requests. The actual cost of lodging will be reimbursed based upon a hotel receipt that must be submitted with requests for reimbursement.

- A. Travel advance requests for travel expenses where travel includes lodging costs must include the cost of the lodging with the request for a travel advance. Travel advances will be made for meal costs, as outlined below, air travel, car rental fees and registration fees, if any.
- B. If a reservation is not honored or other circumstances beyond the control of the employee occur, and the employee obtains lodging at a higher rate than the advance for travel expenses, the employee may seek reimbursement for said additional cost by submitting a receipt for the lodging, together with an explanation and/or documentation for the failure to obtain lodging at the original advanced amount.

7.2.5 Meals

- A. The per diem allowance for meals and incidental expenses when traveling on City business is specified by the Finance Director and approved by the City Manager, which rate may change from time to time based on local per diem rates as published by the Internal Revenue Service. Per diem days are defined as midnight to midnight. Per diem reimbursements do not require receipts. Examples of per diem covered expenses include meals, beverages, laundry and tips. If the employee is not traveling the entire day, the daily per diem allowance will be prorated for the meals actually required. 12:01 – 7:00 a.m. - Breakfast; 7:00 am – 6:00 pm - Lunch; 6:01 pm – 12:00 am - Dinner
- B. No reimbursement shall be allowed for any meal provided or made available to an employee as part of the cost of a meeting, class, or other function, regardless of whether the employee partakes of the provided meal or purchases his/her meal elsewhere. If such meals are provided, the employee shall deduct the appropriate meal per diem rate from the daily per diem allowance. Continental breakfasts or refreshments that may be included in the registration fees or airline meals are not considered as “meals” subject to deduction from the per diem allowance. If a conference or workshop is sponsoring a meal with a set price in excess of an individual meal per diem rate this higher priced meal may be substituted for the specified meal rate. The employee is required to provide written verification of the cost of the meal, such as registration forms, and/or seminar literature, to document any special situations. A receipt must be provided for payment of any conference or workshop meal when reimbursement is requested in excess of established per diem rates.

7.2.6 Other Expenses

Necessary City business telephone calls at the meeting site, parking charges, and/or ground transportation are reimbursable. The City will not normally pay for rental cars. If incurrence of such an expense is necessary, advance written authorization from the City Manager is required. If a rental car expense is authorized through the Travel Authorization and Reimbursement form, there will be no reimbursement for the additional insurance offered by the rental agency as the City insurance provides collision coverage on authorized rental vehicles being used for City business.

7.2.7 Unallowable Expenses

- A. The City does not reimburse for 1) parking tickets, 2) towing or impound fees, 3) traffic violations, 4) alcoholic beverages, 5) personal entertainment, 6) tobacco, 7) snacks, and 8) other incidental personal expenses or unnecessary or extravagant costs of any kind.
- B. The City discourages combining personal travel with business travel, due to the public’s perception regarding use of City funds. Employees must clearly disclose any personal travel and/or annual leave time to be taken in conjunction with City travel when seeking approval and authorization for travel.
- C. An employee’s family may accompany the employee on City business only with the prior approval of the City Manager. Family accompaniment must be disclosed on the travel request form. If travel is in a City owned vehicle a Liability Waiver form must be signed by the employee’s family members prior to travel. No

expense reimbursement will be allowed for any expenses related to a family member travel with an employee on City business.

7.3. Procedure

7.3.1 Authorization.

All out-of-town travel must be authorized pursuant to 7.1 of this policy, which may result in registration or travel expense to the City must be authorized in advance on a form approved by the City Manager.

7.3.2 Claims

- A. All expenses shall be detailed on a City Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Form and shall provide detailed information regarding expenses claimed. Receipts are to be attached when required.
- B. Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Forms are to be submitted within five (5) working days following any trip. All unused travel advance funds are to be returned with the report. Whenever travel advanced funds have been provided, a completed Travel Authorization and Reimbursement form must be completed within five (5) working days following any trip.
- C. All claims for travel expenses shall be approved by the City Manager prior to payment.

7.3.3 Advances

- A. When requested and approved a travel advance is provided for the following: current per diem rates estimated lodging costs, air fare and other direct travel expenses. The City Manager may approve advances for other travel expenses in unusual circumstances. Travel advances will not be given for amounts of less than FIFTY DOLLARS (\$50.00).
- B. Registration or tuition costs for training or conferences may also be included when requesting travel advances if not paid directly by the City.

7.4 Steps in Travel Authorization Process

- A. Step 1: Completed Travel Authorization and Reimbursement forms must be signed by employee and approved by the Department Head, then forwarded to the Finance Department.
- B. Step 2: Accounts Payable Clerk reviews for completeness and accuracy, then forwards forms to the Finance Director and City Manager for signature.
- C. Step 3: Accounts Payable Clerk will return a copy of the Travel Authorization and Reimbursement form to traveling individual, on yellow paper, which is ultimately completed and returned to A/P within 5 days of completed travel, then forwarded to the Finance Department for review of actual expenses.
- D. The Travel Authorization and Reimbursement Form is found in Appendix "C"