



Title:
EMPLOYEE TRAVEL POLICY

Subject:
TRAVEL, VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT & PARKING

Page:
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Policy Number:
08.00.00

Category:
DISTRICTWIDE POLICY

Approval Date:
01/22/2015

Last Revised Date:
06/05/2018

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the “District”) recognizes the need for Department Heads to allow employees to travel to meetings or work assignments at various District or other locations. This policy framework is designed to clarify what the District will and will not permit and/or reimburse.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to set out the District policies, procedures, and guidelines regarding employee business travels.

AFFECTED AREAS:

This policy applies to all District employees. Application of this policy does not preclude the application of other District policies, ordinances, or other regulations as may be warranted by a given situation.

DEFINITIONS:

Vehicle/Equipment: These guidelines govern District owned, leased, and rented vehicles as defined in the District- Vehicle Policy and also staff use of personal vehicles.

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:

1) Travel Expenses:

- a. Travel expenses include ordinary and necessary expenses for transportation, hotel accommodations, meals and incidental expenses.
- b. These guidelines apply whether or not the employee is using a District issued Purchasing Card so that expenses are charged directly to the District or if using their own method of payment and asking for reimbursement.
- c. Employees are prohibited from accepting travel related benefits (e.g. free airplane tickets, free hotel rooms, etc.) from current District vendors, unless otherwise approved by the General Superintendent and/or his/her designee.

2) Allowable Transportation Expense:

- a. Modes of transportation authorized for official travel in the course of District business will include automobiles, trains, airlines, buses, taxicabs, rideshare vehicles and other usual means of conveyance. Transportation may include fares and expenses incidental to transportation such as parking, tolls, baggage transfers and reasonable tips.
- b. All fares or expenses other than mileage, shall be accompanied by a receipt indicating the amount paid.
- c. Transportation between place of lodging and place of business at a temporary and distant work location shall be allowed as a transportation expense.

3) Mode of Transportation:

- a. In cases where an individual for their own convenience travels by an indirect route or interrupts travel by direct route, that individual shall bear the extra expense. Reimbursement for expenses shall be based only on such charges as would have been incurred by the most direct and economical route.
- b. All travel shall be by the most economical mode of transportation available, considering travel time, costs, and work requirements and should be discussed with Supervisor before the travel takes place.
- c. Travel on airplanes shall be coach class. Any charges incurred as a result of changes to an original airline reservation made prior to or during travel are subject to Department Head approval.

4) Use of Privately Owned or Rented Conveyance:

- a. When a privately owned automobile is used in the conduct of official business and such use is authorized or approved as advantageous to the District, payment shall be made on a mileage basis at rates not to exceed those published by the Cook County Bureau of Administration.
- b. Reimbursement for the cost of automobile parking fees and tolls shall be allowed.
- c. When a privately owned automobile is used for travel, the total transportation cost (including mileage allowance, parking fees, and tolls) shall not exceed the cost of public transportation, if reasonable public transportation is available.
- d. If travel is directly from home at start of day to first non-regular work location or to home at end of day from last non-regular work location, 10 miles (or 20 if both ways) will be deducted from the total travel mileage so as to not reimburse employee for a normal commute.
- e. The use of rented automobiles will be kept to an absolute minimum and rented only in an emergency upon prior approval of the Department Head. Every effort shall be made to obtain other suitable transportation rather than to use rented vehicles. Where emergencies require the use of a rented vehicle, the most economical vehicle available and suitable for the conduct of District business shall be obtained.

5) Living Expenses:**a. Meals and Incidental Expense:**

1. Travel that will include reimbursement for meals, must be submitted to the Chief Financial Officer for pre-approval.
2. Meals/meal reimbursements will only be approved for authorized business-related travels overnight, or for travel related to work that is longer than an ordinary day's work, unless the meal/meal reimbursement is a part of a conference registration.
3. Employees authorized by the Department Head or General Superintendent (and pre-approved by Chief Financial Officer) for overnight travel, or for travel related work that is longer than an ordinary days work, shall be limited to a per diem set by the current U.S. General Services Administration in their Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) Meal and Incidental Expense (M&IE) rate. Travel rates differ by travel location and are periodically revised by the Federal Government. These rates can be found at the GSA "Domestic Per Diem Rates" website page at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.
4. The per diem rate is a maximum amount and is intended to include all meals and incidental expenses during the period of travel. All expenses reported and /or submitted for reimbursement must include a receipt. There will be no reimbursement for meals and incidental expenses beyond the per diem rate or for amounts beyond the total of receipts submitted.

b. Lodging:

1. Travel that will include reimbursement for overnight lodging must be submitted to the Chief Financial Officer for pre-approval.
2. Reasonable costs of hotel accommodations incurred will be allowed. Lodging shall be reimbursed by receipt or paid via Purchasing Card up to the limits of the current Federal Travel Regulations as shown on the GSA "Domestic Per Diem Rates" website page at www.gsa.gov/perdiem.

Questions of reasonable hotel accommodations should be referred to the Finance Department.

- c. Special Expenses: The reasonable cost of certain miscellaneous expenses incurred shall be allowed to a traveler. The following are examples of miscellaneous expenses:

Reimbursable

Photocopying or Printing Services
Storage or Baggage
Hire of Room for Official Business
Telephone Calls on Official Business

Non-Reimbursable

Entertainment
Alcoholic Beverages
Traffic Tickets

All special expenses shall be itemized on the Travel and Expense Form with receipts attached.

6) Documentation:**a. Travel and Expense Form Preparation:**

1. All travel, other than parking or public transportation only, must be documented on the Travel and Expense Form even if the expenses were paid by a District issued Purchasing Card.
2. Parking only or public transportation only paid via Purchasing Card can be documented on the Purchasing Card Voucher form and do not need a separate Travel and Expense Form completed.
3. All claims for reimbursement of travel expenses paid by the employee shall be submitted on the Travel and Expense Form and shall be itemized in accordance with these regulations.
4. The Travel and Expense Form shall show the purpose of travel, the dates of travel, the points of departure and destination, and the cost of the transportation secured or mileage calculation if a non-District vehicle is used. These same regulations are required if travel expenses are being reimbursed to the employee or if the expenses were paid with a District issued Purchasing Card.
5. The Travel and Expense Form shall be supported by receipts in all instances for transportation, lodging, meals and all other items. Also, if pre-approval from the Chief Financial Officer was required, a copy of such authorization is to be included.
6. Expenses incurred via a Transportation Account (*ex. I-Pass, Metra or Ventra*) where no actual receipt is produced can be supported by a printout of the Account Activity with the specific expense highlighted.
7. The Travel and Expense Form shall be prepared and signed by the individual who has incurred the expenses.

8. The individual submitting the Travel and Expense Form is personally responsible for accuracy and propriety. Intentional misrepresentation shall be cause for disciplinary or legal action.

b. Approval and Submission of Travel and Expense Form:

1. The Travel and Expense Form shall be approved by the Department Head or designated representative, who shall sign and submit to the Finance Department. A copy of the Form should be retained by the Department as well as the person submitting the Form.
2. Any Travel and Expense Form not prepared in accordance with these regulations or not properly supported by receipts where required will be returned to the originator for correction.
3. Reimbursement will be paid via the employee's paycheck in the next payroll cycle.

c. Frequency of Submission:

The original Travel and Expense Form shall be sent to the Finance Department by no later than the last day of the following month in which the travel expense was incurred. Travel and Expense Forms submitted 60 days after the end of the month in which travel expense was incurred may not be reimbursed.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Department Heads: District Department Heads shall be responsible for: **(1)** executing the travel regulations in this policy; **(2)** authorizing travel in advance and submitting for pre-approval as needed; and, **(3)** developing a system for the prior authorization and control of travel to prevent expenses exceeding appropriations and to hold travel to the minimum required for efficient and economical conduct of District business.

Finance Department: The Finance Department shall manage the implementation of this policy.

District Employees: District employees are required to comply with this policy.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Department Heads/Department Head designees should be trained on this policy.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all District employees.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.

REFERENCES:

Cook County Personnel Rules

Rule 8: Conduct and Discipline of Personnel

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Employee Handbook Rules of Conduct

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Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Title 1: District Vehicle Policy (FPDCC Code Section 1-14: 1-4)

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Title 4: Motor Vehicles and Traffic (FPDCC Code Section 4-2: 1-15)

POLICY LEAD:

Stephen Hughes
Chief Financial Officer

APPROVAL:

Eileen Figel
Deputy General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

Approved: 01/22/2015

Revised: 04/15/2016

Revised: 06/05/2018

Board of Commissioners:

Activity: Adopted Employee Travel Policy (Resolution)

Date: 10/25/2016

Activity: Adopted Amended Employee Travel Policy (Resolution)

Date: 06/05/2018

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Office of the General Superintendent
Attn: Anthony D. Tindall, Policy & Special Projects Manager
69 W. Washington St., Suite 2040, Chicago, IL 60602
Office: (312) 603-8351; Email: Anthony.Tindall@cookcountyil.gov



APPENDIX A:

Travel and Expense Reporting and Reimbursement Guidelines

GUIDELINES:

- 1) **Commuting Expenses:** Commuting expenses between an employee's *home and regular permanent assignment*, including a non-District facility, will not be reimbursed, even if an employee's regular place of assignment is at different locations on different days within the District.

Example: An employee who is regularly assigned to the General Headquarters (GHQ) in River Forest, IL on Mondays and to the Downtown 69 W. Washington headquarters in Chicago on Tuesdays through Fridays, shall not be reimbursed for travel expenses from the employee's home to GHQ. Travel expenses to and from the employee's home on any day will not be reimbursed when assignments are permanent.

- 2) **Temporary and Minor Assignments (mileage between temporary duty points):** Employees who receive one or more temporary assignments in a day may be reimbursed for transportation for getting from one place to the other when they use their personal vehicle. Mileage from the employee's regular place of assignment, or first duty point, to all temporary duty points and back to regular place of assignment, or last duty point, is entitled to reimbursement. If employee's first or last duty point is not their regular assigned location and they report to the first duty point directly from home or directly to home from the last duty point, they are entitled to reimbursement of that mileage less 10 miles so as to not reimburse for a normal commute.

Example: If employee A, who normally works at GHQ, goes to the Botanic Garden for a two hour meeting at the beginning of the day, they get mileage reimbursement from home to the Botanic Garden less 10 miles and for all mileage from the Botanic Garden back to GHQ.

General Guidelines:

1. Mileage must be computed on the basis of the most direct route. Any mileage incurred solely for personal reasons is not reimbursable;
 2. Reimbursements for transportation expenses may only be for services performed for the District.
- 3) **Travel & Expense Form:**
 - a. The Travel and Expense Form must be completed for all travel related expenses, other than parking or public transportation only, even if expenses were already paid for by District issued Purchasing Card.
 - b. A column on the Travel and Expense Form indicates whether the expense is to be reimbursed to the employee or is just being reported.
 - c. For each stop of business use, enter date, travel from and travel to location, miles and expenses between each stop.
 - d. When travel between home and first or last temporary duty point is authorized, the employee's home residence shall be entered on the Travel and Expense Form as "Travel From" or "Travel To."
 - 4) **Authorized Attendance at Seminars, Conventions, etc., on District Business:** Any expenses beyond registration fees will be considered as travel related and these expenses shall be detailed in accordance with the procedure detailed in this policy.