

**COUNTY OF ORANGE, VIRGINIA
PERSONNEL POLICIES MANUAL**

TRAVEL AND TRAVEL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

POLICY NO.: 3.8

EFFECTIVE: 11/1/96

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6/25/07

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OVERVIEW: This policy defines the procedures for approval of job-related travel and reimbursement for authorized travel-related expenses. It also establishes guidelines for reimbursement of business-related meals and use of personal vehicles for local and regional travel. It is the intent of the County to reimburse individuals traveling on official County business for reasonable and customary expenses incurred. As always when incurring expenses to be paid by the County, economy, prudence, and necessity are of primary concern. Expenses incurred that have not received proper approval, that fall outside the parameters described in this policy, or that are not documented in accordance with this policy will not be reimbursed.

Travel expense records and information are open to the public and must be able to sustain the test of public review. It is the policy of the County to limit travel costs to only those expenses that are necessary for providing essential services to the County's citizens. Further, employees and travel planners must seek ways to reduce the cost of travel.

Employees traveling on official County business will exercise care in incurring expenses to minimize the cost to the County. Excess costs resulting from circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations or services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business will not be reimbursed.

SCOPE: This policy applies to all employees working for Orange County.

DEFINITIONS:

1. Authorized Travel: Travel to be performed by employees, that is reviewed and approved in the budget process, and for which funds are included in the budget.
2. Local Travel: All daily travel to be performed within the boundaries of Orange County by employees in accomplishing their assigned duties.
3. Regional Travel: All daily travel to locations outside the boundaries of Orange County for the purpose of attending meetings, training, or other official functions. Regional travel requires Department Director or Constitutional Officer approval.

4. Extended Travel: All overnight trips to destinations outside Orange County to attend meetings, conferences, training, or other work-related functions.

PROVISIONS:

A. Approval

Travel requiring overnight accommodations must be pre-approved by the Department Director or Constitutional Officer. Department Directors travel must be pre-approved by the Assistant County Administrator for Operations, the Deputy County Administrator, or the County Administrator. Cost of the travel must be within the department's approved travel budget.

B. Expense and Reimbursement Guidelines

1. *Transportation in Route and Return*. Employees are expected to use the most direct, practical, and economical mode and route of travel. Transportation costs are paid only if they are reasonable and necessary to accomplish the County's business.
 - a. *County Vehicle*. County vehicles should be used for day and overnight travel whenever practical and possible.
 - b. *Personal Vehicle*. Personal vehicles may be used for transportation for local, day, or overnight travel. The rate of reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle is equal to the rate established annually by the Internal Revenue Service (www.irs.gov). Finance will publish changes to these rates as they occur. Reimbursement for use of a personal vehicle (including any lodging and meal costs) in lieu of commercial transportation for out of state travel will be made only up to the cost of the use of commercial airfare to the same destination. At the employee's request, reimbursement is provided for travel in personal vehicles that is necessary during a workday. The distance normally traveled from home to the worksite (or the equivalent distance), is not payable. For example, if an employee is driving from their home to Richmond, Virginia (round trip) on an otherwise normally scheduled workday, the employee should subtract the normal commute miles (round trip) that would have been driven between their home and their normal work location when submitting their request for reimbursement. In the event an employee has an accident while driving a personal vehicle on official County business, the employee's insurance will be responsible for all damage, injury, or other loss. In some instances, the employee may be eligible for Worker's Compensation. Employees should report all accidents to their supervisor, in accordance with Policy 4.15 – Workers' Compensation.
 - c. *Commercial Transportation*. Employees shall use the most economical and efficient mode and route of travel and will only be reimbursed for travel necessary to accomplish the County's business. Reimbursement for

commercial transportation will not exceed economy or coach rates. Whenever possible, the cost of commercial transportation shall be paid using a County credit card. Detailed receipts must accompany all requests for reimbursement for commercial transportation expenses.

2. *Transportation at Destination.* Employees are expected to use the most economical mode of transportation at their planned destination. Courtesy transportation should be used when available.

The cost of a rental car will not be reimbursed except under extraordinary circumstances as approved by the Department Director, Constitutional Officer, Assistant County Administrator for Operations, Deputy County Administrator, or County Administrator. Employees authorized to enter a contract for use of a rental car will be permitted to use a standard-size vehicle, unless a larger vehicle is required to accommodate the number of persons participating in the business purpose of the trip. Rental car insurance shall not be reimbursed. Rental car insurance coverage is included in the County's auto insurance coverage. A copy of the County's vehicle insurance information should be obtained from the Procurement Department prior to travel and should be accessible for the duration of the trip. Any accidents should be reported promptly.

3. *Lodging.* Employees are expected to use the most economical option with respect to lodging while being mindful of safety and location. Employees should use the established federal per diem rate authorized for lodging (<http://gsa.gov/perdiem>) at that location as a benchmark for what constitutes reasonable costs. When determining the most economical lodging, employees should consider all costs that will be incurred with their selection such as travel to and from the hotel, and parking fees. Lodging exceeding 150% of the federal per diem rate must be justified to explain why it was deemed the most economical option. As an exception, when attending a conference or seminar held at a lodging facility, employees may be reimbursed for the cost of staying at that facility, or facilities specifically suggested by the conference or seminar. Reimbursements for lodging will be paid at the single room rate. When lodging is included in the registration fee, the employee will not be reimbursed for alternative lodging accommodations. Whenever possible, the cost of lodging shall be paid using a County credit card. Detailed receipts must accompany all requests for lodging expenses.

4. *Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE).* Generally, meals and incidental expenses are reimbursable on a per diem basis (not actual expenses) for official approved travel. The per diem is provided in lieu of a detailed submission of expenses (receipts). The meal per diem includes any taxes and/or tips on the meal purchase. The incidental per diem includes items such as snacks and water as well as tips given to porters, baggage carriers, and hotel staff. Meals and incidental expense reimbursement guidelines are established annually by the U.S. General Services Administration (www.gsa.gov) Daily per diem rates shall be reduced by individual meal per diem rates when meals are provided at no additional cost to the employee

(unless prior approval due to dietary restrictions). For example, if lunch is provided with a conference, then the daily per diem rate should be reduced by the lunch per diem rate for that day. Lodging that provides a full breakfast shall be considered a meal, while a continental breakfast is not considered a meal. Designated periods for individual meal per diem rates:

Breakfast: 12:00am – 10:59am

Lunch: 11:00am – 3:59pm

Dinner: 4:00pm – 11:59pm

Per diem reimbursement rates for first and last day of travel shall be adjusted based on departure and return time.

First Day – travel beginning before 7am – 100% of daily per diem rate

First Day – travel beginning after 7am – 75% of daily per diem rate

Last Day – travel ending after 7pm – 100% of daily per diem rate

Last Day – travel ending before 7pm – 75% of daily per diem rate

As an alternative to utilizing the per diem rates, employees are permitted to request approval for reimbursement of actual meal expenses and incidentals or use their county issued credit card for these purchases. Detailed receipts are required for all purchases when the per diem is not in use. The per diem may not be used in conjunction with any other alternative methods during the same trip. When the per diem is not requested, employees should use the per diem limits as a baseline in determining reasonableness of purchases.

5. *Official Business Meals.* Generally, reimbursement for meals is not authorized for other than extended travel. When it is determined by the County Administrator, Deputy County Administrator, Assistant County Administrator for Operations, Constitutional Officer, or Department Director to be in the best interests of the County, reimbursement may be authorized for official business meals during regional or local travel. Generally, these will be “representational” events when the County official is hosting someone from outside the County. When authorized, reimbursement will be based on actual expenses. Detailed receipts, attendees’ names, and business purpose of the meal are required.
6. *Allowed Expenses.* The following additional expenses are allowed for reimbursement above transportation, lodging, and M&IE:
 - a. Taxes and surcharges paid by the employee for lodging
 - b. Business telephone calls, modem charges, telegrams, and facsimiles made for official business
 - c. Tolls and parking fees when paid for by the employee while conducting official County business
 - d. Others as required to accomplish County business and not elsewhere excluded

Additional individual expenses must be identified when filing for reimbursement. All individual expenses more than \$20 must be supported by receipts.

7. *Ineligible Expenses.* The following expenses are ineligible for reimbursement:
- a. Articles lost or stolen during travel
 - b. Alcoholic beverages
 - c. Damage to personal vehicles, clothing, or other items
 - d. Services to gain entry to a locked vehicle
 - e. Movies charged to lodging bills
 - f. All expenses related to the personal negligence of the employee, such as fines
 - g. Personal entertainment expenses
 - h. Towing charges (unless for the repair of a County-owned vehicle)
 - i. Expenses for children, spouses, and companions while on travel status
 - j. Laundry Services

The above list is not all-inclusive. Employees should use careful judgment and remember that all travel expenses are open to the public and must sustain the test of public review.

C. Reimbursement Procedures

1. Employees must file claims for reimbursement of expenses covered under this policy no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the return date of travel or, from the date of the meal requested for reimbursement.
2. Reimbursement of mileage for authorized use of a personal automobile will be made based on submission of an appropriately approved Form 3.8.2 detailing the miles traveled.
3. Reimbursement for extended travel expenses (excluding mileage) will be on Form 3.8.1. When they are required by this policy, detailed receipts and ticket stubs will be attached to the form when it is submitted, unless per diem rates are utilized. Any personal mileage eligible for reimbursement during extended travel should be documented on Form 3.8.2 and submitted in conjunction with Form 3.8.1.
4. Knowingly submitting a false or inaccurate claim for travel/meal expense reimbursement will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from County employment and may result in criminal penalties.
5. Requests for reimbursement will be approved and signed by the Constitutional Officer or Department Director. Department Director requests will be approved and signed by the Assistant County Administrator for Operations, the Deputy County Administrator, or the County Administrator.

D. Advance Travel Payment

Advance travel pay is not permitted. To reduce the financial impact of travel on its employees, it is the policy of the County to directly pay commercial transportation, lodging, conference registration fees, and tuition for training through accounts payable vendor payments or use of a County credit card.