

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

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| **20.03 Travel** | **Revised: February 16, 2024** |

1. GOVERNING REGULATIONS

Travel is governed by System Regulation [21.01.03](http://policies.tamus.edu/21-01-03.pdf) *Disbursement of Funds*, the [State Travel Management Program](https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/travel-management/#skip-scroll), and the [Textravel](https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/) web pages.

1. DEFINITIONS
   1. Overnight Travel – A state employee is entitled to be reimbursed for lodging, meal and incidental expenses incurred while conducting state business at a duty point outside of his or her designated headquarters.
   2. Designated Headquarters – The area within the boundaries of the city in which a state employee’s place of employment is located.
   3. Place of Employment – The office or other location at which a state employee most frequently conducts official state business.
   4. Duty Point – The destination, other than a place of employment, to which a state employee travels to conduct official state business.
2. TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION APPROVALS

Authorization for all travel must be approved as follows.

* 1. Routine Travel Authorization

The Director has approved all requests for routine travel (within budget limitations) for all current employees of the agency. Routine travel is required for employees to perform their assigned duties and is defined to include:

a. all in-state travel in a Texas A&M Forest Service vehicle.

b. all out-of-state travel for emergency response activities (see section 3.6 for special requirements).

c. non-overnight travel to Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

d. out-of-state travel by Coop employees to perform duties for the Coop or for Texas A&M Forest Service as a member of the Coop.

e. overnight travel to Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Tennessee for FEPP and FFP equipment.

* 1. Non-Routine Travel Authorization

Non-routine travel for employees must be approved with a [Travel Authorization](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Travel%20Authorization.docx) form for each trip. Non-routine travel is defined to include:

a. travel in a personal vehicle if reimbursement will be requested.

b. travel out-of-state for activities other than purpose authorized in section 3.1, b through e, above.

c. travel for which an advance is requested.

d. foreign travel.

e. travel to Alaska, Hawaii, Canada or Mexico.

f. travel for which “actual cost” reimbursement will be requested.

If reimbursement will not be requested, travel in a personal vehicle requires verbal approval from the supervisor but does not require a Travel Authorization form.

All foreign travel must be approved in advance by the Associate Director for Finance and Administration to ensure compliance with export control requirements.

* 1. Travel to the Washington, D.C., Area

Travel to the Washington, D.C., area requires prior approval by the Director and advance reporting (3 weeks prior to trip).

1. Approval is requested by completing and submitting the [Travel Authorization](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Travel%20Authorization.docx) form.
2. Advance notification for all Washington D.C. area travel must be provided to the AgriLife Office of Federal Relations. Upon approval of the Travel Authorization form by the Director, the Executive Assistant will complete the required on-line Washington D.C. Travel Form.

Advance notification of Washington D.C. area travel must be provided to the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations (OSFR) if: (1) appropriated funds are to be used to pay for the travel, and (2) the traveler will be engaging in activities to obtain or spend federal funds or to impact federal policies. Texas A&M Forest Service does not allow funds held in state treasury to be used for out of state travel; however, appropriated funds held locally (accounts beginning with a 13 or 14) may be used. If the travel meets these criteria, the OSFR’s [Report of State Agency Travel to Washington, D.C](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/general/State_Funded_Travel_To_DC_Form_2015.pdf). must be completed and attached to the Travel Authorization form.

1. If the traveler intends to provide testimony to a Congressional Committee or an Agency Rule-Making Authority, a copy of the testimony must also be attached. Upon approval of the Travel Authorization form by the Director, the Executive Assistant will submit the required report to OSFR.
   1. The following approvals are required for the Travel Authorization form. This form should be routed through the chain of command. The approved Travel Authorization form should be sent to the accounts payable office if an advance is requested; otherwise, the form should be returned to the employee.

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| **Travel Type** | **Required Approvals** |
| Non-Routine Travel  Washington, D.C. area  Foreign Travel *(travel outside of U.S. to foreign countries)*  “Actual Cost”  Other Non-Routine Travel  Associate Directors  All Other Staff | Director *(3 weeks prior to trip)*  Director and Associate Director for Finance and Administration (export controls compliance)  Director  Director  Associate Director |

* 1. Limitations

Texas A&M Forest Service does not allow out-of-state or foreign travel on funds held in the State Treasury (accounts 110000-129999). Also, foreign travel is not authorized, regardless of the funding source, when the destination is to a country classified as ‘extreme risk’ on the System Risk Management [International Travel Risk Status](http://assets.system.tamus.edu/files/safety/pdf/travelrisk.pdf) website.

* 1. Out-of-State Emergency Response

In addition to the above requirements, the following special provisions pertain to out-of-state travel on emergency response.

a. Authorization to mobilize staff to an out-of-state emergency response incident is made by the Associate Director for Resource Protection, upon consultation with the Director.

b. Individual staff assignments to out-of-state emergency response incidents are made through TICC.

1. TRAVEL ADVANCES
   1. Employees should utilize direct billing arrangements or Travel Cards to the maximum extent possible to cover their travel expenses.
   2. When a travel advance is needed, the traveler must complete a Travel Authorization form, obtain approval from appropriate approving authority, and submit it to the accounts payable office. *[Note: The approved Travel Authorization form must be received at least 7 days prior to the travel to ensure that the advance is issued in time.]*
   3. Upon review and approval, the accounts payable office will issue a check or direct deposit to the employee and send a copy of the approved form to the appropriate office associate.
   4. Upon completion of the travel, the travel advance must be repaid. This is accomplished by preparing a Travel Voucher and submitting it through the process described below. If the travel expenses are less than the travel advance, the employee must return the excess funds. This is accomplished by including it with their administrative unit’s next bank deposit and coding it to account 019220-1320.
   5. Travel advances must be cleared within 30 days of completion of the travel. Failure to do so will subject the employee to appropriate corrective actions, including: (a) being placed on payment hold, (b) being prohibited from receiving future advances, (c) disciplinary actions taken by department head or (d) other actions deemed appropriate by the Associate Director for Finance and Administration.

TRAVEL PAYMENTS

* 1. As soon as possible after a trip but at least monthly, employees should submit a [Travel Voucher](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Travel%20Voucher.xlsx) through the appropriate approving authority to the accounts payable office. If the trip involved a travel advance, the employee must note the amount of advance received on the Travel Voucher. If an employee does not submit a travel voucher within 90 days of the trip end date, the reimbursement will be treated as taxable income to the employee. The reimbursement will be processed through the payroll system and appropriate taxes will be withheld.
  2. All Travel Vouchers must be supported by required receipts. For non-routine travel, a copy of the approved Travel Authorization must be attached.
  3. The accounts payable office reviews the Travel Voucher for compliance with all applicable travel regulations and processes for payment. The Travel Voucher preparer is contacted if the Travel Voucher contains instances of noncompliance or other problems. Any adjustment to the payment amount requires approval, usually by email, from both the employee and the Travel Voucher approver.
  4. Travel payment can be made by direct deposit. Employees need to set up an Expense Payment Election in Workday to provide banking information. Otherwise, a check is mailed to the address listed on the Travel Voucher and on screen 203 in FAMIS. Travel checks are held for any employee with a delinquent travel advance or other debt to the agency, and the employee will be notified of such.

1. ALLOWABLE EXPENSES FROM APPROPRIATED FUNDS (ACCOUNTS 100000-199999)
   1. Payment for travel expenses from Appropriated Funds is made in compliance with System Regulation 21.01.03, the State Travel Management Program and the Textravel web pages. Nothing in this Administrative Procedure should be interpreted as altering these requirements.
   2. Employees will make every effort to comply with Textravel web pages. In the event this is not possible, the following is allowed:
2. The mandatory form of payment for all airline fares is the state-issued corporate travel charge card. See the State Travel Management Program – [Airline Contract](https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/travel-management/airline.php).
3. Lodging expenses are reimbursed to employees via the Travel Voucher or may be direct billed to the agency by the lodging establishment, or charged to an agency Travel Card (see Administrative Procedure [30.06](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/admin_procedures/3006%20Travel%20Cards.docx), *Travel Cards*). Employees may be reimbursed for actual costs of lodging, up to the applicable [Textravel](https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/rates/current.php) reimbursement rates from appropriated funds (1 account). Any lodging amount exceeding the applicable Textravel reimbursement rates must be paid from non-appropriated funds (2 or 4 account).

c. If the lodging rate is greater than the [U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) per diem rate](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287), written approval by the applicable department head is required.

d. Exception for Emergency Response:

An employee deployed for emergency response away from their home office who is unable to obtain lodging at the state rate within reasonable proximity to their temporary duty point (location of deployment) may be reimbursed for lodging above the applicable GSA rate and may charge the full cost to appropriated funds.

Payment documentation (travel voucher, direct bill or departmental travel card) submitted to the Budgets and Accounting Department must cite Texas Government Code 660.209 to indicate the employee was deployed to carry out emergency or disaster response activities and unable to obtain lodging at the state rate within reasonable proximity to their duty point.

Written approval by the applicable department head to exceed the GSA rate is not required.

* 1. Meal expenses are reimbursed to employees via the Travel Voucher and may not be direct billed to the agency by the lodging establishment.
  2. Irrespective of permissible reimbursement found in the Textravel or System Regulations, an employee may not be reimbursed for meals when traveling on official business that does not require an overnight stay unless the meal is considered a business meal and is substantiated as such.
  3. Contract travel vendor exception information must be indicated on the first page of the Travel Voucher whenever a non-contract travel vendor was used. Employees should verify that the exception is allowable before incurring the expense.
  4. Employees traveling in-state with or on behalf of the Director may be authorized for “actual cost” reimbursement. Prior written approval from the Director is required. *[Note: “Actual cost” reimbursement is defined by the General Appropriations Act as not more than twice the regular maximum rates.]*
  5. Employees are reimbursed for only allowable and reasonable expenses incurred for official business.

1. ALLOWABLE EXPENSES FROM NON-APPROPRIATED FUNDS (ACCOUNTS 200000-899999)
   1. Agency programs and departments are not required to use the State Travel Management Program when using non-appropriated funds to pay travel expenses.
   2. Employees will make every effort to comply with the Textravel web pages. In the event that this is not possible, the following is allowed:
2. Lodging expenses are reimbursed to employees via the Travel Voucher or may be direct billed to the agency by the lodging establishment, or charged to an agency Travel Card (see Administrative Procedure [30.06](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/admin_procedures/3006%20Travel%20Cards.docx), *Travel Cards*). Employees may be reimbursed for actual costs of lodging, up to the applicable GSA rate.
3. If the lodging rate is greater than the GSA rate, written approval by the applicable department head is required.
4. A supervisor, department head or associate director may determine if it is appropriate or necessary to send more than one employee to the same event, meeting, seminar, conference or other travel destination.
5. Exception for Emergency Response:

An employee deployed for emergency response away from their home office who is unable to obtain lodging at the state rate within reasonable proximity to their temporary duty point (location of deployment) may be reimbursed for lodging above the applicable GSA rate and may charge the full cost to non-appropriated funds.

Payment documentation (travel voucher, direct bill or departmental travel card) submitted to the Budgets and Accounting Department must cite Texas Government Code 660.209 to indicate the employee was deployed to carry out emergency or disaster response activities and unable to obtain lodging at the state rate within reasonable proximity to their duty point.

Written approval by the applicable department head to exceed the GSA rate is not required.

* 1. Meal expenses are reimbursed to employees via the Travel Voucher and may not be direct billed to the agency by the lodging establishment.
  2. Irrespective of permissible reimbursement found in the Textravel or System Regulations, an employee may not be reimbursed for meals when traveling on official business that does not require an overnight stay unless the meal is considered a business meal and is substantiated as such.
  3. Requests for exceptions to the above must be submitted to the Associate Director for Finance and Administration. It is recommended that employees obtain approval prior to the trip to ensure that they can be fully reimbursed.
  4. Employees traveling in-state or out-of-state with or on behalf of the Director may be authorized for “actual cost” reimbursement. Prior written approval from the Director is required. *[Note: “Actual cost” reimbursement is defined by the General Appropriations Act as not more than twice the regular maximum rates.]*
  5. Employees are reimbursed for only allowable and reasonable expenses incurred for official business.

INCIDENTAL TRAVEL EXPENSES

Incidental expenses are travel expenses incurred other than meals, lodging or transportation while in travel status. Incidental expenses do not include expenses that would be incurred regardless of whether the individual was travelling. Receipts are not generally required for incidental expenses, but the expenses must be itemized by date in the Travel Voucher documentation.

a. Reimbursable Incidental Travel Expenses

Below is a list of reimbursable incidental expenses.

* Hotel occupancy or similar taxes for which a state employee is entitled to be reimbursed
* Business telephone calls
* Airline baggage charges
* Cost of money orders
* Gasoline charges when rented, leased or state-owned motor vehicles are used
* Toll charges
* Repair charges when a state-owned motor vehicle is used
* Copying charges
* Freight charges for state equipment or materials
* Admittance fees while accompanying clients of the state
* Foreign travel: passport or visa charges, airport boarding passes, departure taxes and inoculations
* Postage
* Notary fees
* Charges to exchange U.S. currency for foreign currency and vice versa. The exchange rate used for conversion of monies must be stated.
* Travelers’ checks charges if a state agency requires the employee to purchase the checks
* Books or documents purchased for departmental use while attending a seminar or conference
* Mandatory service charges for loading and unloading state equipment
* Mandatory service charges for meals (only allowed on institutional funds - 2 accounts)
* Facsimile charges
* Sales and use taxes if either the applicable law does not provide an exemption from those taxes or the procedure for claiming a legally available exemption is not honored by the person collecting the taxes. (Sales and use taxes assessed on meals are not incidental expenses.)
* Preparation of the remains and personal property of a deceased state employee
* Attendant care and related expenses

b. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

The following expenses are not reimbursable, regardless of whether they are incurred while conducting official state business. This is only a partial list.

* Any expense that does not relate to official state business
* Any expense that is related to the operation of a personally-owned or leased motor vehicle, with the exception of parking and toll expenses
* Voluntary tips or gratuities (exception allowed when paid from institutional funds)
* Personal expenses, such as the rental or purchase of movies or games for personal entertainment, alcoholic beverages, dry cleaning or laundry. [See exception in section 8.2 below.]
* Kennel expenses for pets
* Sales and use taxes if applicable law provides an exemption from those taxes and the state employee either fails to claim the exemption or does not follow the required procedures for claiming it
* Any surcharge for the use of a credit card

An agency employee assigned to a disaster or emergency response away from designated headquarters may be reimbursed for the actual expense of laundering agency uniforms without supporting documentation.

Any telecommunications costs incurred for official business, amounting to $6.00 or more per voucher, must be supported with itemized receipts or a log.

LIMITATIONS ON REIMBURSEMENTS

System Regulation 21.01.03 and the General Appropriations Act state that an employee may be reimbursed for the **actual** cost of meals limited to the maximum meal reimbursement amount. Travelers that do not prepare their own travel voucher must provide written meal cost information to the voucher preparer.

Employees are not reimbursed for meals that are provided as part of official duties. Also, employees are not reimbursed for meals when traveling on official business that does not require an overnight stay unless the meal is considered a business meal and is substantiated as such.

Agency limits meal reimbursement for in-state travel to $59, regardless of the location-based U.S. General Services Administration per diem rate. The agency allocates the daily in-state maximum meal reimbursement:

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| **Meal** | **Maximum Reimbursement** |
| Breakfast | $12.00 |
| Lunch | $19.00 |
| Supper | $28.00 |

Agency limits the amount of in-state maximum meal reimbursement for the first and last day of each trip based on times of departure and return.

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| **Depart At or Before** | **Breakfast** | **Lunch** | **Supper** |
| 6:00 a.m. | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Noon | No | Yes | Yes |
| 6:00 p.m. | No | No | Yes |

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| **Return At or After** | **Breakfast** | **Lunch** | **Supper** |
| 7:00 a.m. | Yes | No | No |
| 1:00 p.m. | Yes | Yes | No |
| 7:00 p.m. | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Meal receipts are required for foreign travel. Meal receipts are not required for travel within the continental United States, Canada or Mexico.

If the distance between the employee’s headquarters and the travel destination is 60 miles or less, prior approval of overnight lodging by the department head (or incident commander if on an emergency response assignment) is required. The duty point must be outside the employee’s designated headquarters location.

Reimbursable mileage is determined using the electronic mapping service provided by [MapQuest](http://www.mapquest.com/).

1. TAXES
   1. Agency employees traveling in Texas are exempt from the state portion of hotel occupancy tax but are subject to the local portion. Employees should provide a [Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Texas%20Hotel%20Occupancy%20Tax%20Exemption%20Certificate.pdf) when checking in and should check the hotel invoice when checking out to ensure that taxes are properly charged. Agency employees traveling outside of Texas are not exempt from other states’ taxes and will be reimbursed for his or her required payment of hotel occupancy taxes.
   2. The agency is exempt from sales tax on goods or services purchased directly. Employees should provide a [Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate](http://tfsfinance.tamu.edu/modules/finance/admin/procedures/Texas%20Sales%20and%20Use%20Tax%20Cert%20TFS.pdf) to the provider to claim the exemption.
   3. Employees may be reimbursed for sales tax paid for travel expenses for which the traveler, rather than the agency, is the consumer and payer. For example, sales tax is reimbursable for individual meals, parking charges and hotel room internet charges

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