Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District

Employee Travel Policy

Effective November 2024

CVMVCD TRAVEL POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures:
This policy provides guidelines and establishes procedures for employees traveling on the District's behalf and complies with laws relevant to public agencies.

Travel circumstances not covered in this policy shall be treated as exceptions pursuant to the Travel Exceptions section of this policy subject to General Manager and/or Administrative Finance Manager approval.

For the remainder of this document, District business travelers will be referred to as "travelers" or "employees," unless otherwise noted.

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Objectives
The objectives of the District's Travel Policy for Employees are as follows:

1. To outline behavioral expectations of travelers representing the District during authorized travel.
2. To support travel costs incurred on behalf of the District for the purpose of conducting District business.
3. To establish uniform criteria and approval authority for advances and reimbursement of travel expenses for District business travelers;
4. To provide District business travelers with a reasonable level of service and comfort at reasonable cost; and
5. To avoid the improper use of District funds for travel that does not benefit the District.

Guiding Principles
Travel on behalf of the District may be approved only when the purpose results in a benefit to the District.

Travelers are expected to be professional, respectful, and behave in an appropriate manner at all times, being mindful that they are representatives of the District.

All expenses incurred while traveling on District business should be a reasonable and prudent use of public funds. Travelers should choose the most efficient, direct and economical travel options required for the occasion and any individual who chooses a different route, without adequate justification, must assume any additional expense incurred. If for traveler's personal convenience, there is interruption or deviation from the direct route, the travel cost cannot exceed that which would have been incurred on uninterrupted travel.

Occasions for Travel

Examples include the following types of occasions when the District traveler is required to travel to:

1. Attend a convention, seminar, meeting, or training.
2. Make professional presentations as a District employee.
3. Interview people; visit facilities or other agencies; exchange professional information.

Behavioral Expectations

While employees are not in a typical work environment, they are still expected to adhere to the same behavioral expectations as when they are at the District facilities. Employees should be professional and always aware that they are acting as representatives of the District. Employees must adhere to behavioral expectations outlined in the District's Personnel Policies Manual, Civil Respectful Workplace Policy, and any relevant Memorandum of Understanding, if applicable.

Possible Conflict with Labor Agreements or Laws

These policies apply to all travelers on District business unless they are in conflict with specific provisions of existing labor agreements or with specific provisions of state or federal law. In such cases, the provisions of those agreements or laws shall prevail for the employees covered under those agreements or laws.

Common Sense and Prudent Judgment

While this manual tries to provide specific guidelines for most circumstances that might be encountered while traveling on District business, it cannot anticipate all possible circumstances. When such circumstances occur, travelers must use common sense and behave in a manner that is appropriate in a business setting. Employees must also use prudent fiscal judgment and common sense in the expenditure of public funds.

Itemized Receipts

The policy requires travelers to submit itemized receipts in certain situations (airfare, rental car, lodging, etc.) to receive reimbursement or for documentation to accompany their District credit card statement. If itemized receipts are not provided, then reimbursement for the applicable cost may not be allowed.

Personal Credit Card Use

Travelers may use their personal credit cards to pay for travel costs related to District business only with prior approval by General Manager/designee or in situations where the District credit card is compromised during travel. Failure to comply may result in charges not being reimbursed.

TRAVEL PLANNING AND ARRANGEMENTS

Consider All Costs

In choosing the most efficient, direct, and economical mode of transportation, the traveler shall consider total costs including airfare cost, ground transportation availability and cost, alternate airport options, departure and travel times and their impact on work time, expediency, daily expenses, and similar measures of reasonable travel conditions.

Minimizing Time Spent Away

Travelers should schedule their travel so that they leave at the latest reasonable time and still arrive at their destination on time. They should also return promptly as soon as their business is finished, thereby minimizing both the time away from work and corresponding expenses.

Booking Reservations

Travel reservations should be made at least two (2) months prior to take advantage of available discounts and lower rates.

Booking Methods

The District's Purchasing Clerk should be the one to book travel unless arrangements have been made with her/him ahead of time.

When making direct reservations, it is especially important to be sure that expenditures will be a "reasonable and prudent use of public funds." Usually pre-arranged accommodations (e.g., for a conference) provide very reasonable cost choices, and direct booking is easy and efficient, requiring no special justifications.

Cancellations

When travel arrangements must be cancelled, the traveler or Purchasing Clerk is responsible for handling the cancellation and for documenting the cancellation number to avoid possible billing disputes later.

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

Any person traveling on District business and seeking reimbursement from the District, must obtain authorization prior to travel. This authorization should be obtained as early as possible and always prior to the date of travel.

Formal written request for travel reimbursement is made on a Travel Expense Voucher. The Travel Expense Voucher and travel payment request (per Travel Expense Voucher) must be completed if one or more of the following costs are incurred: airfare, lodging, travel-related meals, car rental for overnight travel, or an advance. If other travel related costs are incurred, such as mileage for personal vehicle, parking, registration, or toll fare, they should also be documented.

Travel Expense Voucher Approval
Approval of the Travel Expense Voucher for travel will be as follows:

- Direct Supervisor
- Administrative Finance Manager
- General Manager

Final Approval
Notwithstanding other approvals received, the General Manager and/or Administrative Finance Manager has final approval as to the appropriateness and reasonableness of all reimbursement requests and whether reimbursements shall be made to the traveler.

Travel Expense Voucher
Within 15 calendar days of return from a District business travel or official function, travelers must submit their travel documents to their supervisor to be eligible for any reimbursement.

Documentation Requirement
For each travel occasion, documentation must include a Travel Expense Voucher, a Travel Expense Voucher, and pertinent supporting documentation for the final accounting.

This documentation should include the following:

- ✓ Documentation of the cost of airfare
- ✓ Car rental – original car rental receipt showing the dates and number of days, mileage driven, and type of vehicle rented (the credit card receipt alone is insufficient); written explanation of any unusually high mileage.
- ✓ Agenda for conference, training, special event, including supplemental pages (if any) that have meal and price information.
- ✓ Itemized hotel bill or statement.
- ✓ Receipts for travel expenses greater than $10.
- ✓ Documents showing destination and actual mileage driven for personal vehicle mileage claims.
- ✓ A written explanation if reporting any travel cost which may appear to be unusually high, questionable, or when exceptions have been authorized.

Upon return, traveler will prepare a written report for distribution to the Board of

Trustees in the next regularly scheduled Board Meeting Packet.

<u>TRAVEL EXCEPTIONS</u>

Occasionally there may be exceptions to these policies and guidelines that are reasonable and necessary. Such exceptions should be confined to the following conditions:

1. To serve the business interest of the District.
2. To avoid severe hardship or inconvenience.
3. To observe an established or expected protocol at a specified event; or
4. To respond to an emergency situation.

Approval of Exception

Requests for an exception to the District Travel Policy for Employees must be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis at the supervisory and department levels before submitting to Administrative Finance Manager and/or General Manager for final approval.

Under no circumstances may any District official or employee approve their own exception request.

<u>TRAVEL ADVANCES</u>

Travel Advances Guidelines

Travel advances are allowed when the traveler does not have a District credit card. The Travel Expense Voucher is used for requesting advances (as well as for documenting the final travel expense report). Whenever a District traveler requires an advance of funds for travel expenses, a written, approved request for an advance will be submitted to the Finance Department. To ensure timely preparation of the advance payment, travelers should submit their requests to the Finance department within 30 calendar days before the travel date.

<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>

General Guidelines

When planning the transportation portion of travel, consider all aspects of cost to the District as well as actual transportation costs. In general, a common carrier (e.g., plane, bus, train) is the preferred mode of transportation. However, use of a personal or District vehicle – especially if two or more employees are traveling together – may be less expensive for travel within the State. The increased time for automobile transportation and the potential for lost work time, overtime, or increased lodging costs should be considered in determining the best mode of transportation.

<u>Transportation by Air</u>

Air travel reservations should be made by the District Purchasing Clerk. Air travel may be booked by the traveler, but the Purchasing Clerk should be informed in writing prior to booking.

Air Travel Rules

For air travel, the most direct route is advised with a minimal number of stops.

The traveler will bear the additional cost of changing flight plans due to personal reasons, for the convenience of the traveler, or for staying extra days for personal reasons.

Reasonable and actual add-on airline fees, such as checked baggage fees, may be allowed and require a receipt if more than $10 in cost.

Travelers will be authorized to pay excess baggage charges when traveling with heavy or bulk material or equipment for business purposes. Documentation must be included in the final Travel Expense Voucher explaining the nature of the excess baggage charge.

Unless authorized as an exception, all air travel must be Coach Class. Such an exception must be explained on the Travel Expense Voucher. In the event Coach Class is not available, Business/First Class may be used if it represents the most efficient, direct and economical mode of transportation available.

<u>Transportation by Car</u>

General Guidelines - Driver's License

District employees who drive any car on District business, whether a personal vehicle, a rented car, or a District car, must possess a valid California Driver's License.

Transportation – Car Rental

Car Rental Guidelines

Upon arrival at the destination, travelers may rent a car when it is less expensive than other transportation modes such as taxis, ride-share, airport limousines, and hotel airport shuttles, or when a rental car is needed for other reasons, e.g., ongoing work requirements or inadequate/unavailable ground transportation. A written justification is required on the Travel Expense Voucher. In the event that an unanticipated rental car is required or if any unusual high mileage usage results in higher rental car fees, then a written explanation on the Trip Expense Voucher is required.

Car rental reservations should be arranged through the District's Purchasing Clerk, who will book with the District's designated rental car company or other vehicle option.

When renting a car, travelers should use mid-size or smaller models. Larger vehicles are allowed if there is no additional cost to the District, or if special circumstances exist, such as multiple travelers who will occupy the vehicle, extra business-related luggage, etc.

Employee operation of a rental car for District business is covered by the District's insurance program if traveling within the United States. For employees, a spouse or traveling partner who in not employed with the District cannot be added to the rental car policy as a driver since the rental car is covered by the District's insurance program. Insurance covering any personal side trips or additional driver is the responsibility of the employee.

Reimbursement claims must include the original car rental receipt showing the date(s), number of days and type of vehicle rented and mileage. A credit card receipt alone is not sufficient supporting documentation.

Transportation – Personal Car

Personal Car Guidelines

Travelers, if pre-approved, may use their personal car while traveling for business purposes when one or more of the following applies:

1. Public transportation is limited or unavailable.
2. It is more flexible and timelier than taking public transportation.
3. Expense is equal to or less than alternate transportation.
4. Traveler is willing to accept reimbursement equal to the lowest price of reasonable transport.

Allowable Mileage Reimbursement for District Business Travel

Mileage reimbursement will be based on actual miles traveled. However, mileage between employee's home and the work location is considered to be normal commute and will not be reimbursed. Employee may only claim reimbursement for the added mileage which exceeds the normal home-to-work mileage.

Examples of appropriate use of personal car mileage include:

1. To and from the scheduled carrier service.
2. To and from destinations that do not have scheduled air service.
3. If scheduled air service is available but the traveler still prefers to use their personal car, mileage reimbursement will be based on "equivalent airfare," described below.

Mileage/Reimbursement Rate

Travelers will be reimbursed for personal car mileage expenses for District business purposes, not to exceed established federal rates.

The District credit card is not to be used for personal car mileage expenses, since the traveler assumes responsibility for personal vehicle expenses and will be compensated through mileage reimbursement.

Airfare Equivalent (AFE) Reimbursements

If travelers prefer to use their personal vehicle when air service is available, the reimbursement for mileage will be the lower of: (1) coach class airfare plus other transportation related expenses, such as long-term parking at local airport, rental car, and ground transportation, or (2) the mileage reimbursement amount (miles driven multiplied by mileage rate). Comparison airfare should be from at least two (2) months prior to travel.

<u>Transportation – District Car</u>

Travelers who will utilize a District vehicle must inform the Shop Manager and Mechanics of anticipated travel dates in advance to ensure the vehicle is checked and any necessary routine maintenance and/or enhancements are done prior to travel.

<u>Transportation – Other Ground Transport</u>

Ground Transportation at the Travel Destination

Ground transportation may also be required for moving to and from airports, as well as between work, training or conferencing sites. Various types of transportation may be available for this, e.g., hotel and airport shuttle services, light rail, subway or bus. The most economical and appropriate form meeting the traveler's needs should be used.

Taxi Service or Transportation Networking Company

Taxis or Transportation Networking Companies (TNC), such as Uber or Lyft, may be used when time is of the essence or public transit, or other common carriers are not reasonably available.

When taxi or TNC service is used, receipts are required if the cost-plus tip is over $10. Tips for either transportation service should be no more than 20% of the cost of service, When asked for a receipt, taxi drivers will often hand a blank receipt to the customer. Travelers should ask the driver to fill out the receipt which should include the cab number, cost, including tip (if applicable).

LODGING

Lodging Guidelines

Lodging is allowed if the traveler is required to stay overnight to attend training, meeting, or other business purposes. The lowest cost option should be selected with consideration given to convenience and safety of the travelers.

Lodging Reimbursement Rate

The maximum reimbursement (includes room, resort fee, and transient occupancy tax) for lodging will be at the per diem rate allowed for location of overnight stay. Any amount paid in excess of this will be paid by the traveler. The only exception to the reimbursement rate will be if the traveler stays at a lodging location where the conference, training, or meeting is held. If the lodging location is fully booked, overflow or other lodging options are allowable. In all cases, an itemized lodging/hotel receipt will be required.

Honor refrigerator items, additional fee bottled water and late checkout charges will not be reimbursed unless a business reason is provided and attached to the final Trip Expense Voucher.

MEALS

Travel Meals

Travel-related meal expenses include meals consumed while traveling for business purposes on the District's behalf, as well as while attending training, education or conferences that require travel and the completion of a Travel Expense Voucher. Travelers will be reimbursed for meal expenses, including tax and tips, not to exceed established per diem rates. Employees should always be mindful of public funds in their restaurant selection and meal

Meal Reimbursement Rates

For any meal that the traveler is entitled to, the traveler will be reimbursed at the per diem rate for the area and receipts are not required.

Additionally, employees have the option to receive a stipend paid through payroll in lieu of actual meal expenses. Meals and Incidental Expenses (M & IE) per diem rate includes all meals, fees and tips for persons who provide services such as food service and luggage handlers. Lodging can be paid for using the District credit card. However, if an employee opts for the Meals Only Per Diem, then a personal card or cash must be used for meals. Receipts for meals will not be required; however, employees may want to retain receipts in case of IRS audit.

Meals and Incidental Expenses (M & IE)

The following table shows the breakdown of breakfast, lunch, and dinner components of the daily reimbursement (per diem) rates for meals and incidental expenses while on travel. The M&IE rates differ by travel location see IRS Publication 1542.

M&IE Total	**Breakfast**	**Lunch**	**Dinner**	**Incidental Expenses**	**First & Last Day of Travel**
$68	$16	$19	$28	$5	$51.00
$74	$18	$20	$31	$5	$55.50
$80	$20	$22	$33	$5	$60.00
$86	$22	$23	$36	$5	$64.50
$92	$23	$26	$38	$5	$69.00

For example, if an employee is traveling to a two day conference with two travel days and the per diem is $59, the stipend would include arrival and return travel days at will $44.25, and day 2 & day 3 will be $59. In this case the employee will be issued a stipend of $206.50. If there are meals provided at the conference for example lunch each day, then lunch of $15 will be deducted from the stipend for the days the lunch was provided in this case the stipend issued to the employee would be $176.50.

Example:	No meals provided	Lunch provided at conference
Day 1 (travel begins at 8 am)	$44.25	$44.25
Day 2 (conference)	$59.00	$44.00
Day 3 (conference)	$59.00	$44.00
Day 4 (return; travel ends at 5 pm)	$44.25	$44.25
Total stipend for MIE	$206.50	$176.50

Employees opting for the Meals Only Per Diem stipend

Employees wishing to be issued with the stipend must inform the Purchasing Clerk or employee designated to make District travel arrangements

Tax implications
As long as the travel is business related, an expenses sheet returned stating the purpose of travel with receipts for lodging and the per diem rate is equal or less than the federal rate then employee will not be liable for taxes.

Cancellation Policy
Should the traveler not be able to complete the travel as scheduled and was provided with a stipend any and all funds should be returned to the District promptly.

Meals Provided as a Part of the Program
Travelers are generally expected to take advantage of meals which are considered part of a conference, special event or program, and for which the cost is covered by payment for the event itself.

When a meal is provided as part of the cost of an event, travelers will not be additionally reimbursed for the same meal unless it is not a substantial meal or if other business reasons can be explained. For example, a continental breakfast may not be substantial enough for travelers with special dietary needs. In such cases reimbursement will be provided up to per diem rates, but an explanation must be provided on the Travel Expense Voucher.

In addition, in cases where there is a legitimate reason to make alternate plans from the provided meal, the traveler may submit written justification for reimbursement of the cost of a separate meal and attach to the Travel Expense Voucher.

Alcoholic Beverages
Travelers are to limit drinking alcoholic beverages to after regular District business hours. Alcohol can be consumed during travel however travelers need to remember that they are still representing the District and should behave in an appropriate manner. It is prohibited to purchase alcohol on District credit card. Expenditures for alcoholic beverages including related tax and tip will **<u>not</u>** be reimbursed.

Same Day Travel
For Same-Day Travel, meal reimbursement is allowed if the work plus travel causes an "extended workday." An "extended workday" is when the actual work plus travel causes the normal workday to be extended by two or more hours at either end.

Example:
Assuming an 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. workday, if work and travel time extend the day past 7:00 p.m., then a travel meal (dinner) would be allowed. For this example, if the traveler left his home at 6:00 a.m., breakfast would also be allowed.

INCIDENTAL AND OTHER ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

General Guidelines

Reasonable and necessary costs for other travel expenses will be reimbursed when supported by itemized receipts (only required if item is more than $10) or other appropriate documentation. Such expenses may include the following:

1. Registration fees.
2. Bridge, road or ferry tolls, etc.
3. Fuel for rental cars.
4. Parking (airport parking – when the expense for short-term parking is expected to exceed the one-day rate of long-term parking fee, traveler should use long-term parking. District will reimburse traveler up to the daily long-term rate).
5. Costs directly linked to the program or subject matter of a business meeting/function. Traveler must note purpose of expense on the claim. Examples of such costs include the following:
   - ✓ District business calls
   - ✓ Internet service
   - ✓ Copying
   - ✓ Postage
   - ✓ Printed materials, tapes, training material that may be available for sale at the meeting (if claimed as a travel expense; departments may elect to purchase through other [non-travel] payment processes.)
   - ✓ Other business-related travel expenses determined to be reasonable and necessary by the approver
6. Incidental expenses up to the GSA per diem limit (currently at $5 per day): Per Diem Allowance, describes Incidental Expenses as: “Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships.” The District will reimburse travelers for a reasonable amount of incidental expenses where these are usual and customary. This does <u>not</u> include tips for meals as they are included in the daily per diem meal allowance.

NON-REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

The following incidental and personal expenses are generally **<u>not</u>** allowable for reimbursement:

1. Traffic and parking violations
2. Mileage for District vehicles.
3. Mileage for commuting to work.
4. Emergency repairs on non-District vehicles.

5. Alcoholic beverages.
6. Medicinal remedies, health supplies, cosmetics.
7. Personal entertainment, e.g., in-room movies, saunas, fees for exercise room, sports events, personal reading material, personal grooming, optional tours, souvenirs.
8. Airline club membership fees, airline priority boarding fees, and credit card fees.
9. Childcare fees.
10. Kennel/boarding fees.
11. Tips that exceed District allowances (20% for meals and taxi or Transportation Networking Company drivers).
12. Expenses related to vacation or personal time while on business travels.
13. Personal travel expenses that cause additional cost to the District.
14. Personal losses incurred while on District business.
15. Expenses related to a traveler's family member or friend accompanying the traveler on business travels.
16. Traveler may not claim mileage driven by another person.
17. Other incidental expenses that are determined to be of a personal nature, extravagant, or might be considered to be unreasonable or unnecessary.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATE LAW / VIOLATIONS

All District expenditures are public records subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act and other applicable laws. Use of public resources or falsifying expense reports in violation of this policy may result in any of the following: (1) Loss of reimbursement privileges, (2) A demand for restitution to the District, (3) The District's reporting the expenses as income to the person to state and federal taxing authorities, (4) Civil penalties of up to $1,000 per day and three times the value of the resources used, (5) Prosecution for the misuse of public resources.