

# Travel Request & Expense Reimbursement

## 208.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the procedures by which District employees, volunteers, and Board members may be approved to attend local or overnight seminars, conferences, meetings, and trainings. The policy will also establish procedures, for payment of, and/or reimbursement for District related travel expenses.

## 208.2 POLICY

To be authorized as District approved travel, the requested travel must for District related business and/or beneficial to the members overall personal and professional development.

### 208.2.1 PRE-TRAVEL REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED

All travel will have prior approval prior to committing District funds. A written or electronic Request for Travel Authorization form, a reasonable time period (preferably 4 weeks or more), prior to the date of the intended travel. An official announcement, outline, and/or written agenda must be obtained by the requesting member and submitted with the request. The member should identify/describe the lodging arrangements they are requesting by submitting a price quote from the hotel or other adequate documentation.

All shift employees shall submit their requests to their supervising chief officer. For all non-shift employees, volunteers, Board members' travel requests will normally be routed to the Fire Chief for review and consideration. Requests submitted with inadequate lead time for review and authorization may be denied.

### 208.2.2 LEAST COSTLY / MOST EFFICIENT APPROACH



All travel will have prior approval prior to committing District funds. A written or electronic

### 208.2.3 REGISTRATION

The District will pay registration fees for an approved event. A flyer or announcement with registration information must be submitted with the Request for Travel Authorization Form.

### 208.2.4 LODGING

Overnight lodging may be approved for events that are 90 or more miles from the District boundaries. The District will pay GSA lodging rates for the area of travel ([www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates](http://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates)). However if the District determines that it is the best interest for a member to stay at a conference host hotel, the District shall authorize the higher lodging rate. The traveling member shall seek accommodations that are in compliance with the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990 ([www.apps.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/](http://www.apps.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/)).

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208.2.5 TRANSPORTATION

The approved mode of transportation shall be the most efficient and/or least costly for the situation, based on the needs of the District, unless the traveling member has been authorized otherwise (the member will normally be required to pay the difference). Included approved travel expenses include common carrier cost, parking, airporter, bridge tolls etc.

Whenever practicable, the District preference is to provide the traveling member with a District vehicle and fuel card (officers should use their district-assigned credit card). Although, if no district vehicle is available or the traveler is seeking special permission to use their private vehicle for travel the District will reimbursement for use of personal vehicles shall be in the form of a per-mile payment based on current IRS Standard Mileage Rates (based on government-estimated costs of fuel, depreciation, lease payments, maintenance, repairs, gasoline taxes, oil, insurance, and vehicle registration fees). Mileage must be documented to be reimbursed. The District will not reimburse for: fuel, fines/penalties/tickets/court costs, accident-related costs, and repairs to personal vehicles.

208.2.6 MEALS & INCIDENTALS

Meal and incidental costs may be approved for events that are 90 or more miles from the District boundaries. Travelers will use the GSA per-diem rates for the travel area for meal costs. Travelers will be required to specifically account for actual meal expenses and if they exceed the GSA rate traveler will be required to pay the difference. Tips may not exceed 15% of the cost of the meal and must be shown on the receipt. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable

The amount granted to cover meals will be adjusted to take into account any meals included in the meeting/conferences registration fee.

Incidental Expenses Costs for incidental food items (e.g., bottled water, snacks not provided during breaks) may be claimed for reimbursement if the combined cost of the meals and incidental food items does not exceed the maximum allowable daily amount for incidentals. Actual receipts must also be attached for incidental food items.

The incidental allowance included in the GSA daily per diem rate covers items such as tips for porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, and maids typically incurred when traveling. Incidental items such as cab fare or tolls are not included in the per diem incidental allowance. These types of expenses are reimbursable expenses that the member should submit separately for reimbursements.

208.2.7 RECEIPTS

Original, itemized receipts should be submitted for all reimbursements, including meals. Credit card receipts with no detail except the amount charged shall not be considered itemized receipts and are not adequate documentation by themselves to justify the expense.

The District acknowledges that receipts may not be made available by all vendors during the course of the employee's travel. If a receipt is lost or unavailable, excluding an itemized lodging

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receipt, the District may reimburse the employee for the expense if the member prepares and submits a written justification memo for the expense to the Fire Chief or designee. The written justification for all items, except meals, must include a description of the expense and the reason a receipt is not available. Written justification is to be used for the occasional missing receipt and is not meant for an aggregation of many undocumented expenses. For meals, the name of the restaurant, date and amount should be included with a statement that the amount listed does not include alcohol. An itemized lodging receipt is required per IRS regulations and District policy; if lost or unavailable, the employee must contact the lodging facility for a duplicate, itemized receipt.

**208.3 AUTHORIZATION PROCEDURE**

The appropriate supervisor shall review the members Request for Travel Authorization paperwork for the purpose/objective of travel. The following shall also be considered in authorizing the request;

- a) Consider the availability of funds, staffing resources, and operational needs of the District
- b) Consider the likely impact of the request (e.g. distance/time resources are away, associated cost) to the District
- c) Ensure the least costly / most efficient approach is used
- d) If applicable, offer an alternative to funding the request with a cost share

**208.4 TRAVELERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

Once a member receives authorization for they are responsible for all applicable reservations for the seminar, conference, meeting, or training.

- If there is a need an early reimbursement of a class tuition, an expense must be submitted to the authorizing supervisor with receipt attached. The authorizing supervisor will approve the report and forward it to the Business Manager for processing and payment

The member will need to arrange for;

- a) Requesting the appropriate time off or shift trade as needed
- b) Completing the lodging reservations
- c) Successfully completing/fulfilling the purpose/objective of their travel (e.g., complete training with a passing grade). Members who fail to satisfactorily complete the purpose/objective of the travel may be subject to discipline
- d) Returning as promptly as reasonably possible to the District when the purpose/objective of the travel is completed, or in accordance with the approved travel schedule as approved by the District.
- e) Ensuring that no contraband (including alcoholic beverages) is transported in a District-owned vehicle.

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- f) Ensuring that no one operates a District-owned vehicle at any time or a privately-owned vehicle while engaged in District-related travel while under the influence of any drug, narcotic, or alcohol.
- g) Promptly reporting to their supervisor any motor vehicle accident, injury, emergency aid, or other significant incident occurring during District-related travel. Any vehicle accident involving anyone with injury or complaint of pain shall be immediately reported to the local law enforcement agency with jurisdiction.
- h) Upon return to the District, promptly preparing and submitting required travel documentation, receipts, and remitting any unspent Travel Advance funds, as described in this policy and/or as directed by an authorized supervisor. As soon as practicable after the member returns to the District, they shall be responsible for organizing and submitting to the authorizing supervisor their expense report with related receipts and written evidence that they successfully fulfilled the purpose/objective of their travel.

**208.4 TRAVEL CANCELLATIONS**

Members shall notify the authorizing supervisor as soon as reasonably practicable after becoming aware that they will not be able to complete the travel for which they have already requested District approval, so that the District may make operational adjustments, cancel travel and/or training reservations, and seek available refunds.

Members who notify the Fire Chief or designee of their intent to cancel less than 10 days prior to the departure date of travel may be required to reimburse the District for any non-refundable costs of the travel and/or training, unless the Fire Chief or designee determines that the cancellation and assumption of related costs by the District are reasonably justifiable.

Cancelling approved travel less than 10 days prior to departure as a matter of the member's personal preference or for unexplained personal reasons is not justifiable. Examples of justifiable cancellations may include, but are not limited to:

- Cancellation of the training or other event that was the reason for the travel
- Cancellation or interruption of the approved mode of travel (e.g., unresolvable flight cancellations, highway closures)
- Unexpected serious illness, injury, or death of the traveler or of a family member
- Emergency needs of the District

If the District cancels the member's travel and/or attendance at training, the member shall not be responsible for personally reimbursing the District for any costs. In such situations, if the member has assumed responsibility for any non-refundable costs, the District shall reimburse the member for those costs.

If a member has received a travel advance, they shall be responsible for refunding the District for all advanced funds except any non-refundable costs for which District payment has been specifically authorized.

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