

Chapter 4 – Short-Term Travel (Lodging and Meal Rates)

Lodging Rates and Requirements

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References: [California Code of Regulations \(CCR\), Administration, Title 2 Sections 599.619, 599.624, 599.624.1, 599.625, and 599.625.1](#), [Department of General Services \(DGS\) Travel Bulletin 10-06, Bargaining Unit Contracts, California Department of Human Resources \(CalHR\) PML 2013-022, PML 2013-034, PML 2013-37, PML 2015-039, PML 2016-010, and PML 2016-020](#)

OVERVIEW

Employees on short-term travel status shall be reimbursed for actual expenses for receipted lodging up to the maximum rates provided in this section unless directed to travel under the provisions of California Code of Regulations (CCR) 599.624 or 599.624 (Contracting for Subsistence). Lodging included in conference fees or otherwise provided by the State shall not be claimed for reimbursement.

Reimbursement for short-term lodging will be authorized only when the traveler incurs expenses arising from the use of reasonable, moderately priced lodging establishments such as hotels, motels, bed and breakfast inns, and campgrounds that cater to the public. Costs associated with use of time shares and other privately-owned venues are not commercial lodging establishments and will not be reimbursed. The circumstances of travel will determine the rate allowed.

Short-term travel status is defined as travel a minimum of 50 miles away from the employee's designated headquarters and primary residence, and lasting no more than 30 calendar days in a "single location." A single location is defined as a major metropolitan area, cities in vicinity to one another, and any locations that straddle county or state lines within a 50-mile radius.

The short-term rate is intended for trips of such duration that weekly and monthly rates are not obtainable and will be discontinued after the 30th consecutive day assigned to a single location unless an extension has been previously documented and approved by the appointing power. In extending the short-term travel, the appointing power shall consider the expected remaining length of the travel assignment.

For more information, see Chapter 14 - Short-Term Subsistence Beyond 30 Days.

For more information on out-of-state travel, see Chapter 6 - Out-of-State/Country Travel (OST).

LODGING RECEIPTS

All lodging reimbursement requires a receipt from a commercial lodging establishment. Receipts must show the name and address of the lodging establishment, the employee's name, check-in/check-out date, expenses incurred (hotel rate, taxes, etc.) and indicate charges as paid in full (zero balance). No lodging will be reimbursed without a valid receipt.

THIRD PARTY VENDORS

For third party (Priceline, Expedia, etc.) lodging reimbursement requirements, see Chapter 3 - Third Party Vendors.

STAYING WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Employees who stay with friends or relatives are not eligible for lodging reimbursement.

VACATION, CTO, OR SICK LEAVE

Lodging expenses will not be allowed when an employee is authorized vacation or compensating time off (CTO) while on short-term travel status. If an employee is granted sick leave while traveling on state business, he or she may be authorized to claim reimbursement for travel expenses, up to a maximum of three days. For information on exceeding the three days, see Chapter 14 - Subsistence While on Sick Leave.

LODGING RESOURCES

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the nightly lodging rate is at or below the authorized state government rates found in this section. Lodging reimbursements will be limited to the maximum state allowance determined by the geographical area and the employee's representation status (bargaining unit or non-represented).

Travelers are being directed to use [Concur](#) to view lodging information and to book travel. Employees must have an active Concur account to view lodging. Contact the Travel Payments and Policy Section (916) 227-9061 for login information.

Concur, the State's online travel booking tool, maintains a database of over 85,000 hotels. Concur will display a detailed description of the hotel properties found in the search, as well as all properties that offer a State government rate. Additional information is provided for each hotel, including a hotel description,

transportation, general room information, facilities, hotel policies, information on ADA accessible guest rooms, roll-in showers, and much more.

Requests to exceed the maximum lodging rate must be approved by the Division of Accounting's Travel Policy Section 15 calendar days prior to travel. See Chapter 14 - Excess Lodging Rate Requests.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS (SUCH AS AIRBNB)

This is a residential property that is rented to a visitor for fewer than 30 days through a centralized online platform. The rental is advertised and payments for the rental are securely processed. For purposes of travel reimbursement, a short-term rental shall be considered a commercial lodging establishment.

If you use a non-traditional lodging vendor such as Airbnb.com the daily room rate is determined by combining the accommodations total, service fees, and cleaning fees. Divide the total rental costs by the number of nights to find the daily room rate. Taxes do not affect the daily base room rate calculation. Obtain an Excess Lodging Rate Request if needed. For an example of the calculation please see Travel Information & Policy (TIP) 18-05 Short-Term Rental Daily Room Rate.

SHORT-TERM LODGING RATES FOR REGULAR STATE BUSINESS

Effective January 1, 2024, for all state employees on authorized short-term travel status, the maximum short-term lodging reimbursement rates for receipted lodging expenses will be as follows:

County	Current Maximum Lodging Reimbursement Rate Through December 31, 2023	Effective January 1, 2024: Maximum Lodging Reimbursement Rate
All counties except those listed below	\$90	\$107
Alameda	\$140	\$189
City of Santa Monica	\$150	\$270
Los Angeles	\$120	\$169
Marin	\$110	\$166
Monterey	\$125	\$184
Napa	\$95	\$195
Orange	\$120	\$169
Riverside	\$95	\$142
Sacramento	\$95	\$145
San Diego	\$125	\$194

San Francisco	\$250	\$270
San Mateo	\$140	\$222
Santa Clara	\$140	\$245
Ventura & Edwards AFB, excluding the city of Santa Monica	\$120	\$169
*Rate is for actual lodging expenses, supported by a receipt up to the amount listed, plus applicable taxes and fees based on the state approved lodging rate or approved lodging exception rate.		

NOTE: For short-term lodging rates prior to the rates listed above, please see [Historical Lodging Rates](#).

ENERGY, RESORT, AND TOURISM FEES

Energy, tourism, and resort fees assessed to hotel guests are reimbursable.

HOTEL/MOTEL TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX

The transient occupancy tax (room tax) is imposed by cities within the State of California. Lodging establishments have the option to assess or waive the tax.

Upon making reservations, employees should inquire if the lodging establishment honors the tax waiver. If honored, employees are expected to complete and present a Hotel/Motel Transient Occupancy Tax Waiver Form [STD. 236](#) when registering at the hotel. Transient occupancy taxes not waived by hotels and motels are reimbursable.

STATE SPONSORED CONFERENCES OR CONVENTIONS

For receipted lodging while attending state sponsored conferences and conventions, when the lodging is contracted by the state sponsor for the event, and the appointing authority has granted prior approval for attendance and lodging at the contract rate and establishment: Actual lodging up to \$110 plus applicable taxes.

See Chapter 14 - Excess Lodging Rate Request for approval requirements.

NON-STATE SPONSORED CONFERENCES OR CONVENTIONS

For receipted lodging while attending non-state sponsored conferences and conventions, when the lodging is contracted by the sponsor for the event, and the appointing authority has granted prior approval for attendance and lodging at the contracted rate and establishment: Actual lodging when approved in advance by the appointing authority.

See Chapter 14 - Excess Lodging Rate Request for approval requirements.

Reimbursement of lodging expenses in excess of specified amounts, excluding taxes requires advance written approval from the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR). CalHR may delegate approval authority to departmental appointing powers or increase the lodging maximum rate for the geographical area and period of time deemed necessary to meet the needs of the State. An employee may not claim lodging, meal, or incidental expenses within 50 miles of his/her home or headquarters.

Meal and Incidental Rates and Requirements

References: [California Code of Regulations \(CCR\), Administration, Title 2 Sections 599.619, 599.621, and 599.633](#), [California Department of Human Resources \(CalHR\) PML 2013-022, PML 2013-026, PML 2013-034, PML 2014-030, PML 2014-031](#), and [Bargaining Unit Contracts](#)

OVERVIEW

Employees on short-term travel status shall be reimbursed for actual meal and incidental expenses up to the maximum rates provided in this section unless directed to travel under the provisions of California Code of Regulations (CCR) Administrative Code, Title 2 Sections 599.624 or 599.624.1 (Contracting for Subsistence).

Short-term travel status is defined as travel a minimum of 50 miles away from the employee's designated headquarters and primary residence and lasting no more than 30 calendar days in a "single location". A single location is defined as a major metropolitan area, cities in vicinity to one another, and any locations that straddle county or state lines within a 50-mile radius.

The short-term rate will be discontinued after the 30th consecutive day assigned to a single location unless an extension has been previously documented and approved by the appointing power. For additional information, see Chapter 14 - Short-Term Subsistence Beyond 30 Days.

Reimbursement for short-term meals will be authorized only when the traveler incurs expenses arising from the use of reasonable, moderately priced meal establishments such as restaurants, cafes and diners, etc. that cater to the public.

Meals provided by the state when included in hotel expenses or conference fees, in transportation costs such as airline tickets, or otherwise provided shall not be claimed for reimbursement. Snacks and continental breakfasts such as rolls, juice and coffee are not considered to be meals.

No meal expense may be claimed or reimbursed more than once on any given date or during any 24-hour period. The circumstances of travel will determine the rate allowed.

The term "incidental expenses" means fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships. It does not include taxicab fares, lodging taxes, or the cost of telegrams, faxes, or telephone calls.

STAYING WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

Employees who stay with friends or relatives may claim their actual meal and incidental expenses in accordance with the rates and timeframe outlined in this section.

VACATION, CTO, OR SICK LEAVE

Meal and incidental expenses will not be allowed when an employee is authorized vacation or compensating time off (CTO) while on travel status.

If an employee is granted sick leave while traveling on state business, he or she may be authorized to claim reimbursement for travel expenses, up to a maximum of three days. For information on exceeding the three days, see Chapter 14 - Subsistence While on Sick Leave.

MEAL AND INCIDENTAL REIMBURSEMENT RATES

Reimbursement will be made for actual expenses up to the maximum amounts allowed. The employee must maintain receipts for meal and incidental expenses to substantiate the amounts claimed were not in excess of the actual expenses. Receipts for meals are not required to accompany the travel expense claim; however, the Department has authority to request this information if further substantiation is warranted. An employee may be reimbursed for an allowable meal expense purchased at a commercial establishment (such as a restaurant, café, diner, grocery store/market, etc.) that caters to the general public.

Effective January 1, 2024, for all state employees on authorized short-term travel status, the reimbursement rates for actual meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) will be as follows:

M&IE Expense Category	Current Reimbursement Rate Through December 31, 2023 for Actual Expense	Effective January 1, 2024: Reimbursement Rate for Actual Expense
Breakfast	Up to \$7	Up to \$13
Lunch	Up to \$11	Up to \$15
Dinner	Up to \$23	Up to \$26
Incidentals	Up to \$5	Up to \$5

NOTE: For meals and incidental reimbursement rates prior to the rates listed above, please see [Historical Meal & Incidental Rates](#).

TIPS FOR ALLOWABLE MEAL EXPENSES

Effective May 11, 2020, state employees may receive reimbursement for tips related to allowable meal expenses incurred while conducting approved state business as follows:

Up to \$2.00 or 20%, whichever amount is greater

State employees submitting claims for tips shall only receive reimbursement up to the maximum amount allowed for meal expenses. Expenses in excess of the maximum amount allowed are not reimbursable. For example, if the maximum allowable reimbursement for dinner is \$23.00, then the maximum allowable reimbursement for a \$23.00 dinner plus tip is \$23.00

For more information see Travel Information & Policy (TIP) 20-07 – Reimbursement on Tips for Allowable Meal and/or Transportation Expense.

DEPARTURE AND RETURN TIME REQUIREMENTS

In computing reimbursement for continuous short-term travel of 24 hours or more and less than 31 consecutive days, the employee will be reimbursed **for actual meal and incidental costs up to the maximums** allowed for each meal and incidental expense for each complete 24 hours of travel, beginning with the traveler's times of departure and return as indicated below:

On the first day of travel on a trip of 24 hours or more:

Trip begins at or before 0600 (6:00 am)	Breakfast may be claimed on the first day.
Trip begins at or before 1100 (11:00 am)	Lunch may be claimed on the first day.
Trip begins at or before 1700 (5:00 pm)	Dinner may be claimed on the first day.

On the fractional last day of travel at the end of a trip of more than 24 hours:

Trip ends at or after 0800 (8:00 am)	Breakfast may be claimed.
Trip ends at or after 1400 (2:00 pm)	Lunch may be claimed.
Trip ends at or after 1900 (7:00 pm)	Dinner may be claimed.

TRAVEL LESS THAN 24 HOURS

No lunch or incidentals may be reimbursed on travel of less than 24 hours. When trips are less than 24 hours with no overnight stay, meals are reportable and taxable income.

For more information, see Chapter 17 - Tax Reporting and Withholding Requirements.

For continuous travel of less than 24 hours, employees may claim actual expenses for breakfast and/or dinner in accordance with the following time frames:

Trip begins at or before 0600 (6:00 am) AND ends at or after 0900 (9:00 am)	Breakfast may be claimed.
Trip begins at or before 1600 (4:00 pm) AND ends at or after 1900 (7:00 pm)	Dinner may be claimed.

Personal Expense Differential

References: [Bargaining Unit 9 Contract](#)

The personal expense differential applies to Bargaining Unit 9 employees who are required to be on State business more than 50 miles from their home and headquarters and incur personal, non-receipted expenses as the result of said travel.

Employees receiving reimbursement for business and travel expenses by other means (e.g., statutes, rules or MOU provisions such as the long-term differential or business travel expenses) shall not be eligible for the personal expense differential.

The personal expense differential may only be requested (and shall only be approved) when the employee used facilities such as, but not limited to, house trailers and camping equipment. Staying with friends, relatives, or at one's own second residence does not qualify the employee for a personal expense differential.

Eligible employees may request a personal expense differential rate of:

\$33.00 for meals or \$33.00 for lodging for travel of less than 12 hours if expenses were incurred; and,

\$67.00 for personal, non-receipted expenses associated with travel of 12 to 24 hours if expenses are incurred.

The differential is issued directly from the State Controller's Office. Taxes are withheld from the differential at the time of issuance.

Qualifying employees must complete and submit an approved "Authorization for Non-Commercial Subsistence Differential" Form PM-0918 to:

The Division of Human Resources
Office of Transactions Services, MS-47
P.O. Box 168037
Sacramento CA 95816-8037