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**OUT-OF-COUNTY TRAVEL POLICY**  
**EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 9, 2010**

1. County employees, traveling out-of-County on official County business, will be reimbursed for such travel upon submitting the appropriate travel expense forms and/or receipts to the County Auditor. Travel advances will be given only if travel has been approved by the Commissioners' Court before date of travel and if budget is available to such travel. Court approval agenda items should include provision for those days necessary to travel to the meeting location with allowable costing compliance with Cameron County Travel Policy. Agenda items submitted with travel costs in excess of approved travel policy are subject to change by County Auditor when employee requests travel advance or reimbursement. The County adopts the State of Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts terminology and definitions regarding the County's Travel Policy.
2. All County Travel approved by Commissioners' Court is subject to available budgetary appropriations. No travel advance will be issued without available budget.
3. The County will reimburse actual expense incurred for lodging, not to exceed the maximum daily allowance; receipts must be submitted with the appropriate Travel Claim Form. The County will only advance travel fund for County paid trips. **Department directors and elected officials who travel on behalf of other agencies, or when other agencies provide for travel costs and that agency provides the reimbursement, the County will only provide an advance for the un-reimbursed portion of the travel expense.**

4. All travel expenditures requisitioned must be official encumbrance forms prior to actual travel to ensure that budgeted funds are available. If travel is for a seminar, conference, etc., a copy of the pamphlet or brochure must be attached.
  
5. **REGISTRATION FEES:** A purchase order must be obtained through the Purchasing Department for all registration fees keeping in mind the fact that the purchase order can be cancelled if the trip is cancelled. The fees will be paid by the Accounts Payable Department upon submission of a completed registration/enrollment form. Sufficient time must be allowed to process the necessary paperwork and/or payment before the conference date.
  
6. The maximum daily allowance for hotel stay per evening is \$100.00 per night inclusive of all applicable taxes. The per diem rates for hotel lodging at the following cities are exceptions to the \$100.00 per night per diem rate:

City	Per Diem
Washington D.C.	\$200.00
New York City	\$200.00
Mexico City	\$200.00

The per diem is per person per night. If a room is shared, the accommodations costing more than \$100.00 per night can fall within policy guidelines. For example:

Hotel Room charge per night	\$125.00
State Hotel Tax	9.00
City Hotel Tax	<u>10.00</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$144.00</b>

2 Occupants at \$100.00 per diem each is \$200.00.

If travel is for an association's annual seminar and the hotel rates have been negotiated by the association to have a block of hotel space reserved, then the per diem negotiated plus tax will be the allowable rate. Information must be published in the Association's Seminar Notice. If the application to the seminar is late and the block of rooms are sold out, then the normal per diem applies.

If a County employee is a presenter at the seminar, the applicable rate at the hotel hosting the seminar will apply. The association inviting the presenter should take care of the presenter's hotel arrangements.

Overnight lodging will not be reimbursed for travel within the four-County area to include Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, and Starr Counties. The exception to the policy is when association seminar, **hosted by a County Department**, are held at South Padre

Island. Overnight lodging and meal per diem will be allowed for the individuals involved with the hosting of the seminar. Mileage is not provided to seminars held at South Padre island, if an employee regularly receives an auto allowance. Meals are reimbursed only when staying overnight.

The County may not reimburse a County employee for a lodging expense incurred at a place that is not a commercial lodging establishment.

7. When driving from seminars held in San Antonio and points south that end no later than 3:30 P.M., an overnight stay should not be necessary. A County employee should be able to arrive in the County at their destination no later than 8:30 P.M. Seminars ending at noon or earlier in Austin, Houston, or points south should be able to drive home and arrive at 8:30 or earlier. This is assuming an average speed of 50 MPH and good weather conditions. If the weather is in climate, raining heavily, possible flooding, snowing, icy conditions, or severe storms, please exercise discretion to maintain safety. These situations will be evaluated on a case by case basis. For driving destinations in excess of 350 miles, a full day's travel should be planned. Before embarking on a County-sponsored trip, make sure that the vehicle being used is properly checked for safety equipment and spare tires.

Although travel advance may provide for the maximum per diem, hotel expenses can only be claimed for the actual cost of the room. Telephone calls, movie channels, and snack or beverage charges are not subject for reimbursement. **Hotel/Motel receipts must be itemized.**

8. No travel advance will be issued if a prior travel advance request remains outstanding. No travel advance can be issued if funds are not available in the budget at the time the advance is issued. No advances will be issued contingent upon possible approval of budget amendment. Exceptions to this provision can only be made approval of the County Auditor.
9. Expenses for daily travel (not overnight) will be reimbursed only if total time exceeds six (6) hours **and** travel exceeds 50 miles beyond employee's job site; receipts are required for all expenditures including meals. Meal advances or reimbursements are not to exceed amounts shown below. Meals provided for in the registration fee or lodging will not be included in a travel advance nor shall they be reimbursed. Meals specified in the seminar's brochure will not be reimbursed. Travel starting after 7:00 A.M. or ending before 7:00 P.M. is considered daily travel. County employees requiring special diets that cannot eat the meals provided by the seminar sponsor must provide explanation prior to the trip in order to qualify for a meal reimbursement for a meal included in the registration fees.
10. Expenses for meals when travel time is less than six (6) hours and travel does not exceed 50 miles beyond the employee's normal job site will not be reimbursed.

11. The employee will be reimbursed for Meals as follows:

Morning Meal	\$7.00
Noon Meal	\$8.00
Evening Meal	\$10.00
Full Day:	\$25.00 (before 7:00 a.m. to after 7:00 p.m.)

The County shall not reimburse a County employee for the purchase of an alcoholic beverage unless the employee is a peace officer who purchased a beverage as a purchase of evidence in an administrative or criminal case.

12. The County will reimburse actual expenses on travel by Air, Bus, and Train at the lowest possible rates. That is reimbursement for travel accommodations based upon a 7-day advance notice when trip information was available 7 days prior to travel. When a County employee opts to drive rather than to fly to a destination, the County will reimburse travel based upon a 7-day advanced notice round-trip airline ticket fare. No other charges relating to driving will be subject for reimbursement. Use of a private vehicle for travel outside the County for trips in excess of 800 miles round-trip will be reimbursed at a rate not to exceed the total cost of round-trip coach airfare. (Extradition of prisoners is exempt).
13. The County will reimburse employees for use of personal auto on the basis of \$.44 per mile on the shortest route to and from their destination for travel outside of the County. The number of reimbursable miles traveled by an employee may be determined by point-to-point itemization. Point-to-point mileage may be documented by an employee's vehicle odometer reading or by a readily available online mapping service. When determining the reimbursable miles, the County will consider the route that provides the shortest distance, the quickest drive time or the safest road conditions. An employee using a private vehicle for transportation to conduct official County business will be reimbursed at \$.44 per mile for In-County travel. Employees receiving an annual auto allowance will not be eligible for in-County mileage reimbursement. On regular workday, mileage is calculated from the employee's place of work. If the employee is required to travel on a non-work day, the mileage is calculated from the employee's home.

Those receiving auto allowance are presumed to be reimbursed for their ordinary mileage incurred in the conduct of their normal duties performed within the County. Mileage reimbursement for those receiving auto allowance will be provided for those who travel 50 miles or more beyond the County boundary.

When more than one employee travels in the same vehicle, only one may claim mileage reimbursement. This provision does not prevent any other passenger from receiving reimbursement for other eligible expenses incurred.

Employees who have a County vehicle assigned to them for their sole use should use their County vehicle for one-way trips of eight hours or less. A gasoline credit card will be issued for use with a County vehicle traveling out of the area. Other passengers accompanying a County employee when traveling on County business while utilizing a non-County vehicle shall be covered solely by the auto owner's auto insurance and it shall be understood that the County assumes no risk for their presence in that vehicle. All drivers of non-County owned vehicles should have current and adequate auto insurance.

14. Travel for any purpose other than transporting prisoners and other related law enforcement activities, must first be approved by the Commissioners' Court. Complete details of trip and expenses must be submitted to the Court, along with the agenda item request. When travel is for the purpose of required training and education, certificates of course completion must be completed and included with the travel claim form.
15. Travel Expense Claim Forms are due at the County Treasurer's no later than one (1) week after the travel has occurred. Excess travel funds are due at this time. Travel expenses payable to employees will be paid through Accounts Payable processed within two weeks.
16. It shall be the responsibility of each Official or Department Head to utilize funds for official County business only. A County agent shall minimize the amount of travel expenses paid or reimbursed by the County. The department or agency shall ensure that each travel arrangement is the most cost-effective considering all relevant circumstances. These funds are budgeted for the purpose of allowing Officials, Department Heads and their Employees to attend various association meetings, training seminars, educational seminars, and required law enforcement travel relating to prisoners and probationers.
17. Employees provided a vehicle for their sole use in fulfilling their duties as outlined in their job description shall utilize that vehicle when driving to a seminar or other meetings. A County gasoline credit card will be issued to the driver. The driver must turn in the gasoline receipts with the travel claim form.
18. Family members accompanying County employees on trips for which the County provides mileage reimbursement are not covered by the County auto insurance or general liability for any acts they may cause or acts that may be inflicted upon them. The County assumes no responsibility for the presence of non-authorized persons in a County vehicle or hired non-owned vehicle. Employees transporting non-authorized persons while on a County approved trip for which mileage is to be reimbursed or a County vehicle is provided shall indemnify the County for the costs associated with the non-authorized person's actions. It is the responsibility of the employee who is operating a

vehicle in connection with County assignments to provide a current driver's license and current proof of auto insurance. Failure to maintain current auto insurance shall be grounds sufficient for termination of employment with the County.

19. It shall be the responsibility of each Official and Department Head to see to the strict compliance with this policy. In areas for which this policy statement does not address, the "State of Texas Travel Allowance Guide" as promulgated by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts shall act as guidance for treatment of County travel-related expenditures.

## **GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY TRAVEL**

1. Emergency consideration is only applicable when time constraints between notice of the meeting and Commissioners' Court approval does not allow for normal procedures to be followed. Items must still be presented to Commissioners' Court at the next scheduled meeting.
2. Travel must be considered **mandatory** in reference to training, board or committee membership.
3. Departure date must be prior to next scheduled Commissioners' Court meeting.
4. County policies regarding lodging, meals, registration and mileage are still applicable.
5. All travel requests are subject to available budget.
6. Travel requests must be submitted to the County Auditor for approval.