General Order

Houston Police Department

ISSUE DATE:	NO.
June 27, 2018	200-17

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 200-17, dated May 14, 2014

SUBJECT: TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION AND REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

POLICY

The City of Houston and the Houston Police Department have well-defined travel, payment, and reimbursement policies and procedures that provide administrative and financial controls. This provides complete and timely payments, reimbursements, and advances for travel and travel-related expenses.

All travel- and training-related appendices referenced in this General Order may be accessed via the department's Intranet Portal under the *Training* section of *Departmental Forms*.

This General Order applies to all employees.

1 CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

The following criteria shall be used for approval or disapproval of travel and training requests:

a. Requests should be related to the employee's job responsibilities. Upon approval, the requesting employee shall be carried on *City Business*. The department shall pay all eligible expenses. If the funding is not available, the employee shall be extended the option of attending the training on *City Business*; however, the employee shall be responsible for a portion or all of the expenses.

b. Attendance at most training seminars should be limited to one employee. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

c. Before approval of a request, the employee's division shall ensure similar training is not currently being offered through the department's Training Division or the City of Houston Human Resources Department. The division shall also explore the feasibility, benefit, and cost effectiveness of the requested training being hosted by the Training Division.

   Requests that do not relate to the employee's current job responsibilities but do promote overall professional development, may be permitted in accordance with the following provisions:

   1. The employee may be carried on *City Business* if staffing levels permit the employee's absence.

   2. Expenses shall be the responsibility of the requesting employee.

d. Command Staff members shall determine, based on budget allocation, the number of attendees to major conferences or conventions such as those of IACP, NOBLE, and HAPCOA. Each command shall be assigned a set number of allowed attendees. Attendance shall be based on staffing levels and the function of each command. Requests

over the budget allocation shall be authorized if division staffing levels permit and the employee pays expenses.

e. Employees volunteering to attend training seminars or conferences shall not receive overtime pay unless the Chief of Police gives prior approval. Travel and training overtime requests shall be for compensatory time only.

f. Requests for travel or training on City holidays shall be discouraged because of additional expenses. Whenever possible, the travel or training shall be scheduled for another time. The employee's division may make an exception if it is determined the benefit is greater than the extra expense.

2 APPROVAL OF NONEMERGENCY TRAVEL

A *Travel Authorization to Conduct City Business* form (*Appendix B*) shall be prepared and printed on blue paper for all travel or training requests. All lines through line 7 shall be completed on *Appendix B*. The requesting employee shall sign and date the form, indicating he has read and understands the most current version of City of Houston Administrative Procedure 2-5 Revised (A.P. 2-5).

All travel or training requests require approval through the chain of command through the level of assistant chief or equivalent. Travel or training requests for Command Staff members require approval from the Chief of Police or designee. Approval shall indicate funds are available and estimates are reasonable. Certification that funds are available in the travel or training accounts and that the correct account codes are being assigned should be verified at the command level.

No funding shall be reimbursed or advanced without the signatures of the concerned division commander and assistant chief, and the director of the HPD Office of Budget and Finance on the blue original *Appendix B*.

If the purchase of airfare is reduced by staying overnight on a Saturday, a cost justification worksheet shall be attached showing that the overall cost to the City shall be less with the extended stay than without it.

Travel or training requests not requiring advances, prepayment of fees, and airline travel should be approved prior to departure. Travel or training requests requiring advance payment of registration fees or tuition shall be submitted with the original, completed registration form and the approved, blue original *Appendix B* at least twenty business days prior to the required date.

3 APPROVAL OF EMERGENCY TRAVEL

Travel on an emergency basis should be limited to criminal investigations, prisoner transfers, or providing testimony or evidence in a case when time is critical. Only the assistant chief of the requesting employee may authorize emergency travel. Only the Chief of Police or designee may approve emergency travel requests from Command Staff members. This shall be on a case-by-case basis. Expenses shall be reimbursed in accordance with the applicable sections of this General Order.

Petty cash advances for emergency travel may be provided when the travel relates to:

a. Retrieval of a suspect or obtaining evidence critical to an investigation.

b. Providing testimony or evidence in a case when time is critical.

Upon receipt of the signed and approved blue, original *Appendix B*, the Office of Budget and Finance shall advance the funds for the emergency travel from the Petty Cash Fund.

4 TRAVEL ADVANCES

Travel requests requiring cash advances shall be submitted to the Office of Budget and Finance with the approved, blue original *Appendix B* and *Request for Travel Advance (Appendix C)* at least fifteen business days in advance of the date of departure.

Employees not meeting this time requirement may not receive their advance prior to departure. No advances shall be distributed after departure.

Cash advances shall be made for only meal, hotel, and ground transportation expenses. Within ten *calendar* days following the conclusion of the travel, the concerned employee shall complete all required *Travel Expenses Summary Report & Log* forms *(Appendix D)* and submit them through the chain of command (assistant chief level) to the Office of Budget and Finance. If this is not done within the stated time frame, the department's accounts payable coordinator shall authorize the City to deduct the entire amount of any cash advance from the employee's paycheck in the immediate future. See A.P. 2-5 for further information.

A travel cash advance may be denied if an employee:

a. Requests the advance less than fifteen business days before the advance is needed.

b. Has not submitted an *Appendix D* form for previously completed travel.

c. Has not reimbursed the City for a travel advance that exceeded the actual cost of previously completed travel.

d. Requests less than $100 for the travel advance.

e. Consistently submits an *Appendix D* form late (more than ten *calendar* days after travel is completed).

Cancelled Travel

If travel is cancelled, the employee shall reimburse the City for any cash advance by submitting a personal check or money order in the amount of the cash advance within ten *calendar* days after becoming aware that the trip has been cancelled. If mitigating circumstances arise, the approving authority may substitute another employee. The originally scheduled employee is still responsible for reimbursement of any cash advance he received. Failure on the part of the employee to reimburse the City within ten *calendar* days shall activate payroll deduction procedures.

5 TRAVEL EXPENSES SUMMARY AND REIMBURSEMENTS

Within ten *calendar* days following the conclusion of all travel approved to utilize City funds (excluding time listed as *City Business)*, the concerned employee shall complete all required *Appendix D* forms and submit them through the chain of command (assistant chief level) to the Office of Budget and Finance. The employee shall list on *Appendix D* all expenditures for the travel including reimbursable expenditures and prepaid expenditures as well as any travel advances. Any Purchasing Card (P-Card) expenditures shall be itemized on the *Detail of Expenses* form in *Appendix D*. All original receipts (except as noted later in this section) shall be securely attached or enclosed in an envelope. The division's and command's approval shall be indicated on the appropriate line on *Appendix D* and the forms forwarded to the Office of Budget and Finance for verification and processing.

To expedite reimbursements, care should be exercised to ensure that figures entered on an *Appendix D* have been added accurately and receipts match the amounts shown on the report. Variances should be explained or reimbursements may be delayed.

Reimbursable Expenses

Reimbursable travel expenses shall be listed on an *Appendix D*. Reimbursable travel expenses include all of the following:

a. ***Meals.*** For out-of-town travel, the City of Houston establishes an employee meal per diem amount that includes taxes and gratuities and excludes alcoholic beverages. The meal per diem reimbursement rate is set by A.P. 2-5, but may be modified by the director of the City of Houston Administration and Regulatory Affairs (ARA) Department. The reimbursement rate is determined by location. A Tier 1 reimbursement rate is established for specifically named metropolitan areas. A slightly less Tier 2 reimbursement rate is established for all other locations in the 48 contiguous United States. The approving authority shall prorate the meal per diem amounts for the day of departure and the day of return according to A.P. 2-5.

   Receipts are not submitted for the meal per diem. However, if meals are charged on a P-Card, original receipts shall be submitted with *Appendix D*.

b. ***Mileage.*** Reimbursement for private vehicle use shall be made at the approved City rate with an approved mileage log. Mileage cost should not exceed the cost of a fourteen-day advance purchase round-trip coach airfare unless it is necessary to travel by vehicle because of the need to carry equipment and supplies.

c. ***Tips.*** Tips for taxi cab drivers, baggage handlers, doormen, etc. are reimbursable expenses. They must be reasonable amounts and documented by an attached log. Tips to hotel or motel custodial personnel are not reimbursable expenses.

d. ***Taxi and limousine expenses.*** These expenses shall be reimbursed only if documented by a log listing dates, origination and destination points, and cost per trip. Trips in excess of twenty dollars must have a receipt.

e. All items listed under the below subsection, "Required Original Receipts."

Required Original Receipts

Reimbursable travel expenses that require employees to obtain and submit original receipts with an *Appendix D* include the following:

a. ***Registration fees.*** Original receipts are required if the employee paid the registration fees.

b. ***Air travel.*** Tickets (coach section flight coupon) purchased by the employee shall not be reimbursed until after travel has been completed. The employee shall include the cancelled ticket stub (e.g., passenger receipt or boarding pass). For ticketless travel, an equivalent, approved document shall be submitted with *Appendix D.*

c. ***Gasoline.*** Employees shall include gasoline receipts when a City or rental vehicle is used.

d. ***Car rental.*** The cost must be less than use of a taxi or other ground transportation and the request should be made on the original *Appendix B* form. No luxury or recreational type vehicles shall be leased unless justification is provided and approved in advance by the assistant chief of the requesting employee.

e. ***Parking.*** A receipt or, if a parking receipt is not available (i.e., unattended parking lots), a log identifying the name and location of the parking lot and the telephone number of the parking lot company (if available) must be submitted with the expense report to receive reimbursement for parking. When parking at a parking meter, the employee shall log the time, general location, and amount paid to the meter.

f. ***Lodging.*** Itemized lodging receipts must specifically indicate the single rate is being charged. Credit card charge receipts are not acceptable.

g. ***Purchasing Card expenditures.*** P-Card purchases require original receipts.

h. ***Telephone calls and other business communication.*** Expenses for telephone, overnight mail, Internet usage, and fax for City business are reimbursable, but must be listed on the *Appendix D* and must be supported by an itemized bill or receipt.

6 USE OF CORRECT ACCOUNT CODES

Travel and training expenses shall be charged to the correct travel or training account. Transfers from the command or division accounts shall be required if funds in the division account are not available at the time of the request.

7 LEOSE FUNDS

Questions regarding the use of Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (LEOSE) funds for travel or training shall be directed to either the Office of Budget and Finance or the chair of the HPD committee on LEOSE Funds.

8 INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Questions regarding travel outside the United States shall be directed to the Office of Budget and Finance. Such travel may require additional approval.

9 RELATED GENERAL ORDERS AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

200-03, **Investigation of Employee Misconduct**
300-05, **Workers' Compensation**
300-06, **Training – Classified**

City of Houston Administrative Procedure 2-5 Revised, Authorization and Reimbursement for Local and Out-of-Town Travel and Travel Related Expenses

City of Houston Administrative Procedure 5-6, Purchasing Card Policy and Procedures

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