

ETWD - Employee Handbook – March 2024

Section VI - Management / Employee Relations

Expenses & Expense Accounts

The District reimburses employees for approved business expenses. Employees who have incurred business expenses must submit required receipts and the Expense Reimbursement Form to accounting each month.

Purpose

1. To advance training and professionalism, the El Toro Water District (District) encourages and authorizes attendance at various schools, seminars and conferences by its employees. Employees may also be required to travel both in and outside the state to conduct official District business. The purpose of this travel and expense policy is to furnish rules, guidelines, and procedures for governing reimbursement for travel expenses, and to establish certain procedures concerning travel authorization, documentation, and accounting. The District's objectives are to allow travel arrangements, and activities for its employees that conserve District funds and that have a significant and meaningful link to the purposes, policies, and interests of the District.
2. "Travel" shall mean attendance at meetings, conferences, or other functions on District business at other than the District's facilities. Employees shall not be in travel status to the extent that they travel to perform job assignments related to District facilities within designated service or maintenance areas unless it is overnight.

Authorization for Travel

Employees if authorized by their supervisors may travel anywhere within Orange County to carry out their assignments.

Other travel on District business by employees shall be undertaken only with the prior approval of the General Manager, or the Assistant General Manager.

Travel Arrangements

To ensure the accuracy of travel arrangements and compliance with district policy, all employees will be required to complete all the appropriate travel forms. The forms will then be submitted to the Executive Assistant to the General Manager & Board or designee for processing.

Employees traveling on District business may make all travel arrangements and registrations through the Executive Assistant to the General Manager & Board or designee. All such payment and registration requests must be submitted in a timely manner to allow sufficient time for normal processing.

Policy

1. Employees are expected to exercise good judgment and a proper regard for economy in incurring expenses.
2. When required, the district will prepay airfares, lodging costs and conference registration fees. All such payment requests must allow sufficient time for normal processing and approval prior to payment.
3. When traveling on official District business, employees are encouraged to utilize their personal credit cards and/or cash for all expenses, and then to request reimbursement for such expense. However, in circumstances where the use of such credit cards and/or cash is deemed impractical, and where the total expense is expected to exceed fifty (\$50.00), the District may provide an advance of funds. Such advance shall not exceed one hundred percent (100%) for the total estimated expense.
4. Within ten (10) working days after completion of a trip, a travel expense report should be submitted to the Executive Assistant to the General Manager & Board or designee.
5. Paid receipts for lodging, rail or airfares and conference registration fees are required if such expenses have been incurred. All other receipts received in the normal course of business shall also be attached.
6. There is no objection to an employee's spouse and/or other family member accompanying them on an official trip, provided that their presence does not detract from the employee's performance of duty. However, the District will not reimburse any expenses attributable to any companion.
7. In any situation where extraordinary travel expenses are expected to be incurred, or where this Policy does not adequately cover the situation or would result in an undue hardship, exceptions may be made with prior approval.
8. An employee may use any mode of transportation, designated or approved, including airline, railroad, bus or automobile. Reimbursement will be based on the following paragraphs.
 - A. Travel shall be by the most direct route. If an indirect route is used, the additional costs shall be at the employee's personal expense. Whenever air travel is used, an advance travel request shall be submitted to the Executive Assistant to the General Manager & Board or designee in order to obtain the lowest possible fare.
 - B. Air travel reimbursement shall be limited to economy fares including all applicable fee charges and taxes where such service is available. Travel to and from airports shall be by the most cost effective method.
 - C. Reimbursement for the use of private cars, except those receiving a car allowance, shall be at the rate as established by the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). Mileage reimbursement shall be limited to the economy fare for air travel. Parking charges at

the destination will be reimbursed in accordance with the provisions of this policy. Employees receiving a car allowance will

- D. Reimbursement for the use of rental cars will be allowed only when such use has been approved in advance. Maximum reimbursement for car rental will be for a full-size car.
- E. Travel in District vehicles may be approved when circumstances warrant it. When traveling in a District vehicle, receipts shall be secured for the purchase of gas, oil, and other supplies necessary in-route. These amounts shall be shown on the expense report with a notation that a District vehicle was used, indicating the District unit number, the license plate number and make of the vehicle. The amount of the charge shall be typed opposite the transportation category.

If emergency repairs are necessary, they shall be paid for by the person to whom the car is assigned. All receipts for such payments must be furnished in order to obtain reimbursement.

- F. It is expected that hotel and motel reservations will be made in advance whenever possible, and that lodging will be secured at rates considered reasonable for the particular destination. "Government rates" or "commercial rates" shall be requested at hotels and motels offering these discounts.
- G. Reimbursement for lodging shall be limited to the minimum number of nights required to conduct the assigned District business as approved in advance. If an employee chooses to arrive earlier or stay later, the additional lodging and other expenses related to this decision will be the employee's personal expense.
- H. Generally, an employee shall not use lodging unless the destination is a 75-mile or more drive from the District's Administration Office or unless there is a very early or late official meeting that could justify the employee staying overnight at the destination. The use of lodging must be approved in advance.
- I. Any room service charges appearing on the hotel bill shall be deducted from the bill and reimbursed in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- J. Local and long distance telephone and computer access charges will be reimbursed when such charges are incurred in conducting official District business or making essential personal calls such as a "safe arrival call." Charges will be shown on a separate line of the travel expense report and shall, therefore, be deducted from the hotel bill.
- K. When meals are associated with employee travel the following policies and procedures will apply:

- i. Maximum allowance to cover individual meals, including meal tips, will be provided as follows:

Breakfast	\$25.00
Lunch	\$30.00
Dinner	\$40.00

Under certain meeting or conference circumstances the maximum meal allowance may not be sufficient. In such cases, the General Manager has the authority to review and, if deemed appropriate, may approve the expenditure. Under similar instances involving the General Manager, the President of the Board of Directors shall review, and if deemed appropriate, may approve the expenditure.

- ii. No reimbursement shall be made for meals, other than during travel, without prior approval.
 - iii. No reimbursement shall be made for alcohol at any time.
 - iv. For travel that requires less than a full day, and for the day of departure and day of return on longer trips, the above amounts will be allowed for the meals actually required. All meal allowances shall be entered on the appropriate lines of the Travel Expense Report, with receipt(s) attached.
 - v. When conference, seminar or school registration fees include one or more meals, or where individual meals are otherwise provided, no amount shall be entered for this meal on the travel expense form.
 - vi. Paid itemized receipts for meals, in addition to any credit card receipts, are required if meal expenses have been incurred.
- L. At times when other expenses associated with travel are required, employees will be reimbursed for all business expenses necessary to conduct the assigned District business. Examples include, but not limited to the following:
- i. Airport parking charges when air travel is used.
 - ii. Parking charges at the destination hotel or garage when transportation is by private or rental car.
 - iii. Airport bus/shuttle, taxi or rideshare fares where free airport bus/shuttle service is not available.
 - iv. Conference, seminar or school registration fees.
 - v. Local transportation (only as required for official District business).

- vi. A reasonable amount will be allowed for baggage handling, laundry and dry cleaning for employees attending a conference or school of more than one week in length. All receipts for such expense must be submitted with the travel expense report.
- vii. No reimbursement will be made for personal expenses such as newspapers, magazines, haircuts, shoeshines, excessive personal telephone calls, taxi fares to and from restaurants, and other personal expenses.

Safety Shoes

- A. The District requires all of its field employees to wear steel-toed safety shoes. A new employee is required to have at least one serviceable pair of such shoes on the first day of work. The District will either pay the shoe store directly or reimburse an employee for the actual cost of such safety shoes, not to exceed \$400.00. Proof of Purchase will be required before reimbursement can be made.
- B. The allowance for safety shoes may also be used to cover costs for orthopedic insoles as necessary.
- C. Each twelve-month period thereafter, the District will either pay the shoe store directly or reimburse an employee for the actual cost of purchasing or maintaining said steel-toed safety shoes, not to exceed \$400.00. These allowances are not cumulative.
- D. At the discretion of the employee's Department Head, repairs to an existing pair of boots or purchase of a second pair of boots may be authorized during the fiscal year at a cost not to exceed \$400.00. Proof of repair or purchase is required before reimbursement can be made.

Meal Allowance

If an employee is required to work beyond his regularly scheduled shift and through a commonly, recognized mealtime, the employee shall be entitled to a meal at the District's expense. Amounts are to be paid from petty cash funds upon receipt of proof of purchase.

Transportation

In certain instances, where employees are required to frequently utilize private vehicles on approved District business, a regular monthly allowance may be paid for this purpose. The amount of this monthly allowance is set by the Board of Directors. Employees covered by this provision will be notified individually of the amount to be assigned. Said employees will not be paid an additional amount on a per mile basis.

Mileage Allowance

- A. Certain employees are required to take a District vehicle home at the close of work for use in returning to District work sites in the event of an emergency and are required to return such vehicle to the District duty site at the next commencement of work. Use of said vehicle shall be limited to business purposes only. No personal use of same is permitted.
- B. Employees who drive their personal vehicles on approved District business shall be reimbursed at the rate prescribed by the Internal Revenue Service's standards, as adjusted from time to time. Business use of personal vehicles shall be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Employees receiving a monthly vehicle allowance pursuant to Paragraph III above will not be eligible for such reimbursement.

Uniforms and Safety Equipment

- A. Uniforms and safety equipment will be provided and maintained by the District to all field and plant personnel. Field and plant personnel are required to be attired in the prescribed uniform during their working hours.
- B. Uniforms, tools, keys and I.D. cards issued to the employee by the District must be returned to the District prior to or at the time of departure from employment with ETWD.

Personal Cell Phone Allowance

Employees whose job duties include the frequent need for a cell phone, and who have not been issued a District cell phone, may receive extra compensation, in the form of a cell phone allowance, to cover business-related costs on their personal cell phone. No further reimbursement for cell phone costs is available to employees who receive such an allowance.

- A. Employees eligible for a cell phone allowance generally include employees whose job assignment regularly requires emergency call back, irregular work hours or other job related factors that require the employee to routinely utilize a cell phone to enhance their ability to perform their job duties. The General Manager shall give final approval on all cell phone allowances.
- B. The standard monthly cell phone allowance amount shall be \$60.00 per month for a smartphone and \$40.00 per month for a phone without data. No further reimbursement for cell phone costs is available to employees who receive an allowance.
- C. The approved cell phone allowance will be paid bi-weekly as part of the employee's paycheck and will be subject to all applicable payroll taxes. The allowance does not constitute an increase to base pay, and will not be included in the calculation of percentage increases to base pay due to salary increases, promotions, etc.

- D. The employee must retain an active cell phone contract as long as a cell phone allowance is in place. The employee must provide their Department Head and the District's IT department with their current cell phone number and immediately notify both parties if the number changes. Employees receiving a cell phone allowance are expected to carry the cell phone on their person both on and off duty and respond when called for District business.
- E. Employees may choose the cellular service provider and plan design of their choice.
- F. Because the employee owns the cell phone personally, and the allowance provided is taxable income, the employee may use the phone for both business and personal purposes, as needed. Use of the phone in any manner contrary to local, state, or federal laws will constitute misuse, and will result in immediate termination of the cell phone allowance.
- G. If, prior to the end of the cell phone contract, a personal decision by the employee, or employee misconduct, or misuse of the phone, results in the cell phone allowance being discontinued or the need to end or change the cell phone contract, the employee will bear the cost of any fees associated with that change or cancellation.

For example, if an employee resigns, and no longer wants to retain the current cell phone contract for personal purposes, any cancellation charges will be the employee's responsibility.

If you have any questions about the District's expense reimbursement policy, contact your supervisor.