

**Meals and Lodging**

**OVERVIEW**

The University reimburses approved actual lodging expenses incurred while on travel status and pays an allowance to the University traveler for meals and incidentals.

**PER DIEM RATE SCHEDULES**

See *BPPM* 95.19 regarding meal and lodging per diem rates applicable to travel.

**MEALS**

Meal expenses are paid to the traveler on an allowance basis not to exceed the rates in effect at the time of travel. Meal allowances cover the following costs:

- The basic cost of a meal,
- Any incidental expenses,
- Any applicable sales tax, and
- Any customary tip or gratuity.

Individual department heads may have a written policy in place requiring meals be reimbursed at actual costs, as evidenced by a receipt, up to the applicable maximum meal allowance. If this is the department policy, the method must be used to reimburse meals for all travel approved and/or funded by the department.

**Overnight Trips**

In order for a traveler to be eligible to receive reimbursement for a meal they must be in travel status for the *entire* University-defined reimbursable meal period. (See [Reimbursable Meal Periods](#).)

Meals are to be reimbursed at the rate in effect for the area where the traveler stops for sleep. (IRS *Publication 463*) The location rate for meals on the last day of travel continues to be that of the location where the traveler last stopped for sleep.

When calculating per diem, local time is used throughout the travel status period without accounting for time zone changes.

**Reimbursable Meal Periods**

University-defined reimbursable meal periods are determined by the time the traveler either enters or ends travel status or if they are in travel status for the entire day. (See the tables below.)

<b>Enters Travel Status</b>	<b>Meal(s) Reimbursed That Day</b>
Before 8:00 AM	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
After 8:00 AM and before 2:00 PM	Lunch, Dinner
After 2:00 PM and before 6:00 PM	Dinner

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Reimbursable  
 Meal Periods (cont.)

<b>Ends Travel Status</b>	<b>Meal(s) Reimbursed That Day</b>
After 6:00 AM and before 12:00 PM	Breakfast
After 12:00 PM and before 6:00 PM	Breakfast, Lunch
After 6:00 PM	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
<b>In Travel Status for the Entire Day</b>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Non-Overnight (Single Day) Trips**

In order for a traveler to be eligible to receive reimbursement for a meal on a single day (non-overnight) trip, they must meet *both* of the following criteria.

Eleven-Hour Rule

Be in travel status for at least 11 hours. NOTE: The traveler may not stop for a meal just to meet the state-mandated Eleven-Hour Rule. (SAAM 10.40.50.b)

*Exceptions*

A traveler who has been in travel status for at least five hours may be reimbursed for meal expenses *if*:

- They are traveling to perform official business as a Board member, Committee member, Commission member, or Volunteer; *and*
- They are *not* performing these duties as part of their state employment.

(SAAM 10.40.50.b)

Entire Meal Period

Be in travel status for the *entire* University-defined meal period. (See [Reimbursable Meal Periods](#).) The rate of reimbursement is that of the primary destination of the single day trip.

Taxation

Meals purchased during non-overnight travel and reimbursed under the Eleven-Hour Rule are considered to be taxable fringe benefits. (IRS *Publication 5137*)

Travel Services routes any eligible meal reimbursements for non-overnight assignments through Payroll Services to have the applicable payroll tax withholdings deducted from the employee's paycheck. Taxable meal reimbursements are recorded on the PEAR (see *BPPM 55.22*) as earnings types MLS, FLS, or FMV.

Meals purchased during overnight travel are not considered to be taxable fringe benefits.

## **Meals and Lodging**

### **Meals at Official Station**

Official Meetings or  
Training Sessions

See BPPM 70.31 regarding meal expenses for official meetings or training sessions which may be supported by general operating funds, *without regard to travel status or the Eleven-Hour Rule*, if the conditions and procedures in *BPPM 70.31* are followed.

Emergencies

Reimbursement for meal expenses is allowed in emergency situations when the President determines that employees performing critical University functions must remain at their workstations.

Employee in Leadership Role

Reimbursement for meal expenses is allowed when an employee, acting in a custodial or leadership role, must, as part of their official duties, dine with students or other University clients, e.g., coaches dining with student athletes.

### **Furnished Meals**

A traveler does not receive reimbursement for furnished meals. This includes meals included in the lodging rate or registration fee of a meeting, conference convention, or formal training session, regardless of whether:

- The meals do not comply with dietary decisions for religious or other optional choices; or
- The traveler attended the function where the meal was served (e.g., chose not to attend the reception provided by the conference).

Airplane Meals /  
Continental Breakfasts

Departments are not required to limit or eliminate meal reimbursements for meals served on airplanes or for continental breakfasts which may be included in the lodging rate or registration fee of a meeting, conference, convention, or formal training session.

### **LODGING**

Travelers are reimbursed for actual costs incurred at commercial lodging facilities not to exceed the maximum lodging rates in effect for the location and dates of travel. (See *BPPM 95.19* and the definition of commercial lodging facilities under [Commercial Facilities](#).)

All related fees for the reservation, e.g. cleaning fees, must be included in the calculation of the lodging per diem rate. The only additional reimbursable lodging expenses beyond the maximum lodging rate are any applicable sales taxes and/or hotel/motel taxes. EXCEPTION: Maximum lodging rates for foreign locations include taxes in the rates.

For lodging documentation requirements, see [Receipts](#).

## **Meals and Lodging**

### **Commercial Facilities**

WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses unless the traveler uses a commercial facility, which is defined by the OFM as:

A business, nonprofit, or governmental entity that provides lodging accommodations for a fee. A commercial lodging facility other than a hotel must be supported by a tax ID number and must be available to the general public to qualify as commercial lodging. Reimbursement for lodging at a private residence not meeting the criteria above is not allowed.

### **Shared Economy Lodging**

Travelers may book lodging with AirBNB (Air Bed and Breakfast), VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner), and similar shared economy lodging options that meet the definition of a commercial lodging facility. (See definition of commercial lodging facility under [Commercial Facilities](#).) All standard travel policies apply to the use of shared economy lodging facilities.

### **Nonreimbursable Lodging**

#### **Location**

WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses incurred at a lodging facility located at either the traveler's official station or official residence (see *SAAM* 10.30.40.a) except as follows:

- In emergency situations when the President determines that employees performing critical University functions must remain at their workstations.
- When an employee, acting in a custodial or leadership role must, as a part of their official duties, lodge with students or other University clients, e.g., coaches lodging with student athletes.

#### **Fifty-Mile Rule**

WSU does not reimburse lodging expenses incurred at a lodging facility located within fifty miles of the closer of either the traveler's official station or official residence. (*SAAM* 10.30.40.b) Exceptions to this requirement include:

- An overnight stay in commercial lodging which eliminates travel for back-to-back late night/early morning meetings. The supervising administrator authorizes this exception on the Travel Authority (TA). (See also *BPPM* 95.01.)
- An overnight stay in commercial lodging due to health or safety concerns. (See also *BPPM* 95.01.) The traveler promptly notifies their supervisor when this exception is invoked and provides an explanation on the Travel Expense Voucher (TEV). (See also *BPPM* 95.20.)

## **Meals and Lodging**

### **Fifty-Mile Rule (cont.)**

- When the approving administrator determines that staying overnight is more economical to the University than returning to the official station or residence. The approving administrator provides a justification and analysis, which is attached to the TA or TEV.

### **Departure, Arrival, and Cancellation Fees**

WSU does not reimburse using state funds for departure, arrival, and/or cancellation fees that are incurred without a business purpose.

### **Risks of the Booking and Quality of Facility**

When selecting a lodging venue, the traveler assumes the risks of the booking and quality of the facility, including safety features of the facility and assurance for their own safety.

NOTE: Shared economy lodging facilities may not be required to comply with the same code and safety requirements as other commercial facilities. The University strongly recommends that travelers research lodging options thoroughly.

WSU is not responsible for costs incurred if lodging is not up to the standards of the traveler upon arrival.

### **Exceptions to Exceed Maximum Lodging Rates**

Except as specified below, reimbursement for lodging costs may not exceed the Maximum Lodging Amount for the location. The following exceptions apply to all high cost and other locations, including foreign destinations. See *BPPM 95.19* for Maximum Lodging Amounts.

### **Lodging Exceptions**

Unless a unit qualifies for a Lodging Exception, the maximum amount that the unit may pay for lodging expenses is the Lodging Exception Ceiling. The Lodging Exception Ceiling is the amount equal to 150 percent of the total daily per diem allowance (lodging plus meals and incidentals) for the location. See *BPPM 95.19* regarding daily per diem allowance rates.

The unit may use state funds to pay up to the Lodging Exception Ceiling if one or more of the following Lodging Exception Rules applies. The department must document the applicable exception rule number on the TA and the TEV with the authorizing administrator's signature. (See *BPPM 95.01* and *95.20*.)

### *Lodging Exception Rules*

The Lodging Exception Rules are:

- (1) When costs in the area have escalated for a brief period, either during special events or disasters.
- (2) When lodging accommodations are not available in the area at or below the Maximum Lodging Amount, and the savings achieved from occupying less expensive lodging at a removed site would be consumed by additional transportation and other costs.

## **Meals and Lodging**

### *Lodging Exception Rules (cont.)*

- (3) When the traveler attends a meeting, conference, convention, or training session where they are expected to have *business interaction* with other participants in addition to scheduled events, and it is anticipated that maximum benefit will be achieved by authorizing the traveler to stay at the lodging facility.
- (4) When a traveler is assigned to accompany an elected official, foreign dignitary, or others as authorized by law, and is required to stay in the same lodging facility.
- (5) To comply with provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or when the health and safety of the traveler is at risk.
- (6) When a meeting room is required and it is more economical to acquire special lodging accommodations, e.g., a suite, than to acquire a meeting room and a room for lodging.

### Expenses Exceeding 150 Percent

When all three of the following circumstances apply, the University Controller may approve payment of lodging expenses in excess of 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem amount for the location (also referred to as the Lodging Exception Ceiling):

- The traveler is required to attend a meeting, conference, convention, or training session where the traveler is expected to have business interaction with other participants in addition to scheduled events; *and*
- It is anticipated that maximum benefit will be achieved by authorizing the traveler to stay at the lodging facilities where the meeting, conference, convention, or training session is held; *and*
- The lowest available advertised lodging rate at the lodging facility exceeds 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem amount for the location.

Documentation supporting the lodging rates is to be attached to the TEV or its file location referenced.

## **Receipts**

An *original* itemized lodging receipt indicating the room rate and all applicable charges and taxes must be submitted with the TEV. The receipt must indicate that the lodging vendor was paid. (See also *BPPM 95.20*.)

NOTE: A scanned copy (e.g., PDF) of the itemized lodging receipt may be submitted with the TEV. However, unless the quality of the scanned image meets the state's minimum requirements, the department must retain the paper original until the end of the retention period for the TEV. See *BPPM 90.21* regarding imaging records and *BPPM 90.01* regarding records retention requirements.

## **Meals and Lodging**

### **Receipts (cont.)**

Receipts from third-party vendors (e.g., Expedia, Hotels.com) do not always provide the nightly lodging rate. If Travel Services is unable to audit for compliance with policies, the reimbursement may be denied.

### **Lost Lodging Receipts**

If a lodging receipt is unavailable or lost, a traveler may attach a completed and signed Affidavit of Lost Receipt to the TEV along with a bank statement showing the amount paid. After verification Travel Services may approve reimbursement on an exception basis.

The Affidavit of Lost Receipt form is available in PDF format on the Procedures, Records, and Forms (PR&F) website at:

[policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/forms/](http://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/forms/)

## **TRAVEL TRAILERS/ CAMPERS**

The Controller, with the traveler's concurrence, may approve the use of travel trailers or campers if suitable commercial lodging is not available, state lodging is not provided, and there is a benefit to WSU for the traveler to remain at a temporary workstation rather than commute to suitable lodging. Prior written approval is required for this exception to policy. Under this situation, the traveler is reimbursed according to the nonhigh cost hourly and daily rates.

When a traveler elects to use a travel trailer or camper in lieu of commercial lodging facilities for their convenience, lodging reimbursement is the actual space rental cost as evidenced by a receipt not to exceed the nonhigh cost lodging rate. The traveler is not reimbursed for the rental or lease cost of the travel trailer or camper. Meal reimbursement is at the nonhigh cost meal rate designated in *BPPM* 95.19. (See also a definition of commercial lodging facilities under [Commercial Facilities](#).)

## **PAYMENT METHODS**

### **Personal Resources**

Travelers may use personal resources or a WSU Travel Charge Card (see *BPPM* 95.03) to book and pay for lodging costs. The traveler must wait until after the trip end date to submit a TEV to seek reimbursement for these expenses.

The University recommends that the traveler book directly with the vendor in order to avoid paying for the full reservation in advance. When doing so the traveler is also able to request government rates and discounts that are not offered when booking through third parties online.

## **Meals and Lodging**

### **Nonemployee Lodging**

A department may pay for nonemployee lodging with a WSU purchasing card. (See [Payment of Direct Billing for Lodging.](#))

### **Direct Billing**

A department may request that the vendor directly bill the department for lodging in accordance with this policy:

- For all nonemployees;
- For WSU employees accompanying students or nonemployees;  
*or*
- When more than five WSU employees are traveling and there is a cost savings or administrative efficiency for WSU for using a block of hotel rooms rather than reimbursing the traveler for each hotel room purchased.

When a contract is required in association with lodging, the appropriate central administrative office (e.g., Contracts Office) or a person holding delegated contractual authority in accordance with *BPPM* 10.10 must process the contract. While a department may, within the scope of this policy, use direct billing, the department is not authorized to enter into contracts without an official delegation of contractual authority.

### **Payment of Direct Billing for Lodging**

Departments must include, at a minimum, the following documents to support any direct billing payments made in accordance with this policy:

- A copy of the agreement entered into between the lodging provider and WSU stating the lodging to be provided and the applicable charges;
- A list of the University employees and other attendees for whom such lodging services were provided and the dates the services were provided; *and*
- A sufficiently detailed bill to ensure that payments are made in conformance with the written agreement between the parties.