

# **Mississippi State University Travel Services Guidelines**



**April 2025**

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# 1. General Instructions

## 1.1 Introductory Statement

No policy and procedure manual can address every conceivable travel situation in an organization the size of Mississippi State University. The intent of this manual is to provide employees with a set of practical rules and guidelines deemed to be in the best interest of the institution, its faculty, staff, and students, while also ensuring compliance with the laws set forth by the State of Mississippi.

If special circumstances warrant, minor exceptions may be approved on occasion by the Travel Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Procurement and Contracts or others as deemed necessary. Such exceptions will be considered only if determined to be in compliance with the laws of the State and the best interest of the University.

## 1.2 Traveler and Approver Responsibilities

Certification Required -- Each claim for reimbursement of travel expenses is certified by the employee in the User Electronic Agreement as follows:

1. This is a true and accurate accounting of expenses incurred to accomplish official business for Mississippi State University, and there are no expenses claimed as reimbursable which relate to personal or unallowable expenses.
2. All required receipt images have been attached to this report.
3. I have not received, nor will I receive, reimbursement from any other source(s) for the expenses claimed.
4. In the event of over-payment or if payment is received from another source for any portion of the expenses claimed I assume responsibility for repaying Mississippi State University in full for those expenses.

**By accepting the User Electronic Agreement when submitting an expense report, the traveler is certifying that the expenses claimed are for MSU business only, and all amounts are correct to the best of his/her ability.**

**The departmental approval of the report is verification that the next higher administrator has reviewed the expense report and supporting documentation, and he/she agrees with the traveler that all expenses claimed are for MSU business. This approval is also certifying that the department has funds to support the reimbursement. There is a checklist on the Travel Services website in the event the approver needs assistance with reviewing/approving a request or report.**

Penalty of Fraudulent Claim -- The MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, Annotated, Section 25-3-45 provides: "It shall be unlawful for any person to claim, receive, approve, or allow any item of

expense for official travel in excess of that authorized by Section 25-3-41. If any person shall knowingly and willfully violate any of the provisions of said section, such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred fifty dollars and, in addition, shall be removed from the office or position which he holds. Such person shall also be civilly liable for the full amount of the expense account illegally received, allowed, or approved by him, and the person receiving same shall be so liable whether the violation be willful or not."

Per IRS regulations, travel expenses that are not reimbursed within 60 days of travel become taxable to the employee. MSU has determined the added administrative burden of tracking and filing this additional income is not in the best interest of the University, therefore, employees SHALL submit all travel reimbursement requests within 60 days of the end date of travel.

### 1.3 Definitions

- **Travel Status** - The official status of an employee when away from the employee's Official Duty Station and Official Residence on official state business. The employee who works in two or more offices or regular places of work may claim mileage reimbursement to travel from one office or regular place of work to another place of work, but not between any regular work site and home, regardless of the distance of the commute. An employee is not in travel status and shall not receive lodging or meal reimbursement while at his Official Duty Station.
  - **Employees whose trips do not require an overnight stay are not eligible for lodging or meal reimbursement. In the event an employee is traveling for official state business and not staying overnight, the employee may only receive mileage reimbursement if a state-owned vehicle is not available.**
- **High Cost Meal Allowance** – Maximum amount allowed to be reimbursed. High Cost Meal Allowances are dependent upon location. To determine the High Cost Meal Allowance in a specific area, refer to the High Cost Meal Allowance Calculator. MSU does not reimburse a per diem rate (actual expenses only).
- **Meal Reimbursement** - Reimbursement of actual cost of meals when an employee is in travel status. Reimbursement shall not exceed the amounts set forth by the State of Mississippi. Meals are reimbursed based on actual cost not to exceed the maximum daily reimbursement for the location of travel.
- **Mileage Reimbursement** - The rate set forth per Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, which mandates that state officers and employees traveling on official state business in their private vehicle be reimbursed at the same rate federal employees are for official federal business in a private vehicle. The current reimbursement rate is set forth in the Mileage Reimbursement Rate memo (<http://www.dfa.ms.gov/dfa-offices/purchasing-travel-and-fleet-management/purchasing-andtravel/travel/>.)

- **International Travel** - All travel to areas other than of the 48 contiguous United States and Alaska.
- **Official Duty Station** - The city, town, or other location where the employee's regular place of work is located, or the city, town or location where the employee's primary work is performed on a permanent basis. If the employee regularly works in two or more areas, his/her official duty station shall be where the regular place of work is located. The regular place of work should be determined by the entity head or authorized designee based on total time ordinarily spent working in each area and the degree of business activity in each area.
- **Official Residence** - The city, town, or other location where an employee maintains a residence which is used as a primary residence by the officer/employee. Determination by the entity head or authorized designee regarding an employee's residence is to be based on items such as voter registration, ownership, or long-term rental of a personal residence, and the permanent address carried in the officer/employee's personnel file.
- **Regular Place of Work** - The city, town or other location at which the state employee works or performs services on a regular basis as determined by the entity head. Mileage is not reimbursed between any regular place of work and home.
- **Temporary Place of Work** - The city, town or other location at which the employee performs services on an irregular or short-term (generally one year or less) basis. State employees traveling on official business will be reimbursed for authorized and documented expenses between home and the temporary place of work, provided the temporary place of work is not within the city, town, or location of their regular place of work.
- **Public Carrier** - Any entity that offers transportation of people to the public for pay, which may include airlines, buses, and trains.
- **Restricted / Non-Refundable Airline Tickets** - If a passenger for some reason must cancel the trip after purchasing this type ticket, none of the money paid for the ticket will be returned. Many airlines will allow unused tickets to be used as a credit towards future travel after paying a fee to change the ticket. Contact ALTOUR for questions.
- **Unrestricted/Refundable Airline Tickets** - Unrestricted airfares allow for refunds and changes in travel dates without penalties. Different airlines have different procedures for refunds and changes. This airfare usually has no special advance purchase, Saturday stay, or certain days to travel requirements. Contact ALTOUR for questions.

## 1.4 Travel Authorization

- Domestic
  - Prior approval should be obtained by an approved Request in Concur if MSU funds are being used to reimburse the employee when the traveler is traveling to a conference, association meeting, symposium, etc.
  - The only travel instance in which prior approval in Concur is not required is if the traveler is traveling for routine travel, if there is no cost to MSU, or if Foundation funds are being used.
    - Best practice is to always have written approval for any type of travel such as an approved Concur request or email approval from your supervisor before traveling.
    - Employees should follow their departmental procedures, as they may require employees to always submit requests using Concur. Please be sure to consult with your department head and/or business manager.
- International
  - Prior approval (approved Request in Concur through International Institute and President's Office) and completed MSU A-04 is required when traveling internationally.
    - The Approval Flow should be as follows:
      - Department Head/Dean
      - International Institute
      - Research Compliance
      - Appropriate VP
      - President's Office

## 1.5 Travel Reimbursement

Upon clicking "Submit Report" within an expense report, a Final Review User Electronic Agreement will populate. The agreement states, "By clicking on the 'Accept & Submit' button, I certify that:

1. This is a true and accurate accounting of expenses incurred to accomplish official business for Mississippi State University, and there are no expenses claimed as reimbursable which relate to personal or unallowable expenses.
2. All required receipt images have been attached to this report.
3. I have not received, nor will I receive, reimbursement from any other source(s) for the expenses claimed.
4. In the event of over-payment or if payment is received from another source for any portion of the expenses claimed I assume responsibility for repaying Mississippi State University in full for those expenses.

NOTE: It is no longer a requirement to submit international expenses that exceed the estimated cost through the President's Office upon return from the trip.

## **1.6 EBTA/Advances**

Domestic travel is to be submitted to Travel Services no later than 5 business days into the month following the trip end date.

- Example: Trip ends March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The expense report and supporting documentation are due to Travel Services by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

International travel is to be submitted to Travel Services no later than 45 business days after the trip ends.

- Example: Trip ends February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The expense report and supporting documentation are due to Travel Services by April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

## **1.7 Corrections (addendums)**

If a traveler realizes there are expenses from a trip that he/she failed to include with the original expense report/travel reimbursement voucher, he/she can submit an addendum to be reimbursed after the fact.

- The expense report name should be "Addendum to Report Key XXXX" (reference original report)
- Only include expenses that were not on the original expense report

**NOTE: If the original expense report has not been processed through all approval queues, traveler should recall the report so it can be revised. Addendums are only necessary if the traveler discovers expenses that were not included after reimbursement.**

## **1.8 Combining Business and Personal Travel**

When combining business and personal travel, the traveler should obtain two quotes from ALTOUR. One quote should contain the business only dates, and the second quote should contain the dates of travel including personal time. Please remember when obtaining quotes, the intermediate stops (airports) should be the same in both quotes. Flight costs vary depending on the stops, so this is the only way to ensure a true cost comparison.

The amount the traveler will be reimbursed is dependent on the quote prices. If the business only quote is cheaper, the traveler will be limited to this quote amount for reimbursement. If the business and personal combined is cheaper, the traveler will be reimbursed this amount.

**NOTE: The EBTA may NOT be used when a traveler is combining business and personal travel. The EBTA is meant to provide a means of payment for airfare exclusively for University business trips. Travel that combines personal leave/vacation with University business air travel must be initially paid out of pocket by the employee for later reimbursement of applicable business expense by the University.**

## **1.9 Waivers**

The purpose of a waiver is to explain why a traveler is deviating from MSU Travel Policy. Waiver forms are no longer being used. The explanation for deviating from policy should be included within the expense report in the Comments field (Concur) or a memo attached (paper). This explanation and any supporting documentation is required when:

- Requesting authority to reimburse for rental vehicle with a cost greater than the intermediate size on state contract
- Requesting authority to reimburse for rental vehicle not on current contract
- Requesting authority to reimburse for a hotel other than the conference hotel
- Requesting authority to reimburse travel arrangements not made through ALTOUR (It is the use of public carrier that triggers the need for booking through ALTOUR.)
- Requesting authority to reimburse travel expenses greater than the least expensive cost comparison for airline tickets
- Requesting authority to reimburse for other specific travel situations outside of policy (explanation required).

## **1.10 Receipts**

Exact requirements are found within each expense type section.

- Receipts above \$10.00 are required.
- No daily meal receipts required by Travel Services unless a cash advance is received.

## **1.11 Tips and Tricks**

- Employees traveling as a part of MSU business will be covered under Worker's Compensation. Full-time, benefits eligible employees are also provided with Travel Assistance benefits through our Minnesota Life Insurance Plan. When traveling internationally, MSU students, graduate students, and non-benefits eligible employees should purchase coverage through Cultural Insurances Services International, available through the International Institute.
- In travel situations in which pre-approval is required, a request should be created and approved prior to the trip taking place.



- Expense reports should be approved and sent to Travel Services after the trip has taken place.
- In the event partial reimbursement is requested, please add a comment within the expense report regarding the limitation.

## **2. Meals**

The Department of Finance and Administration establishes the maximum daily rate for meal reimbursement of state and local government employees while on official travel. These same daily rates will remain effective until otherwise notified by the Office of Travel Services. Officers and employees of the State of Mississippi shall be reimbursed actual cost of meals incurred while traveling for the University, not to exceed the daily maximums for specific location or assignment. Current rates for all domestic locations can be found by using the High-Cost Meal Allowance Calculator on our website, [travel.msstate.edu](http://travel.msstate.edu).

Domestic (in-state and out-of-state) – meal rates are entered within Concur and will pull accurately within requests and expense reports.

International – actual costs incurred will be reimbursed as department head deems necessary. Hawaii is considered outside of the continental limits of the United States; therefore, there is no rate assigned by the State.

### **2.1 Reimbursable Meal Expenses**

- Travel must include an overnight stay to claim daily meals.
- Conference Meals:
  - Meal associated with a conference that is not included in registration cost. If supported by a receipt from conference, a meal that exceeds the daily meal allowance will be reimbursed.
  - If a food allergy is present, a note of this issue should be provided by the employee and signed by the department head/next higher administrator.
- Business Meals:
  - Meal expense must be directly related to the active conduct of the University's business.
  - Meal must be during or directly before or after a substantial business discussion.
  - Itemized receipt required.
  - Attendees section of Business Meal expense must be completed.
- Group Meals:

- Receipts included:
  - Receipts should be itemized
  - Attendees section of Business Meal expense must be completed.
- Cash provided to group members:
  - Attendees section of Business Meal expense must be completed.

## 2.2 Meal Tips

Meal tips should be included as a part of the daily meal limitation. If the daily limitation is exceeded because of tips, it is allowable to record total meal tips for each day as a Tips/Gratuities expense (domestic) or in Other (international – MSU A-05). **Total meals tips shall not exceed 20% of the maximum daily limitation.**

- **Example:**
  - **Meal Allowance: \$56.00; Meal total for day: \$76.23; Difference of \$20.23**
  - **In “meals” section, only \$56.00 can be claimed.**
  - **In “other” section, only 20% of \$56.00 can be claimed.**  
 $\$56.00 \times 0.2 = \$11.20$  --- no more than \$11.20 can be claimed in other, even though, the meal tips total \$20.23.

### NOTES:

- Meal allowances are based off where business is occurring, not lodging location.
- Receipts are not required for audit by DFA or Office of Travel Services for regular meal expenses. However, a department head/director has the authority to require receipts for reimbursement. If meal receipts are included with travel documentation, they will not be audited by the Office of Travel Services. The department is responsible for removing any meal expenses not in compliance with the MSU Travel Policy from the reimbursable amount.  
**EXCEPTION:** Receipts are required for business meals.
- Alcohol is not reimbursable under any condition.
- **No more than 20% tip can be reimbursed under any condition.** This should be monitored by the department on daily meals.
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner amounts must be itemized.
- If attending a conference where meals are provided, additional meals expenses may not be claimed.

### 3. Lodging

The University shall reimburse the actual cost of lodging incurred by an employee traveling on official University business. Itemized receipts must be provided for lodging reimbursement. The receipt should contain the name, date(s) of stay, and amount paid. Lodging should be entered as a Hotel expense.

- Reimbursable expenses on lodging receipts:
  - Room rate
  - Cleaning fees and service fees incurred by Airbnb, VRBO, apartments, etc.
  - Taxes and other fees
  - Hotel maid tips claimed as Tips/Gratuities expense
  - Internet/phone calls and associated tax incurred for business reason entered as Internet/Online Fees
  - Parking/Valet and associated tax entered as Parking expense

#### 3.1 ALTOUR

An employee is required to have all travel arrangements (transportation, lodging, rental vehicle) booked through ALTOUR when traveling by public carrier (air, train, or bus). Contract hotels (approved and signed by Associate Vice President & Chief Procurement Officer) and conference hotels are an exception to this rule. Please provide us with a copy of the contract/conference documentation showing the designated hotel.

**NOTE: It is the use of public carrier that triggers the requirement to book through ALTOUR. If public carrier is not used, the traveler is free to make lodging and rental vehicle arrangements without the use of ALTOUR (bearing in mind the State contracts and maintaining a cost savings to MSU).**

#### 3.2 Sharing a Hotel Room

- It is recommended that each traveler obtain his/her own copy of the hotel receipt reflecting amounts paid out of pocket.
- If the receipt is in only one traveler's name, but there are two forms of payment, the traveler whose name is not listed should provide a copy of his/her bank statement showing the name and transaction or copy of the front of the credit card showing name and last four digits **ONLY**.
- If the receipt is in both names with two forms of payment, we will accept for reimbursement without additional documentation.
- If the receipt is in one traveler's name with one form of payment, that traveler should claim the full amount.

- MSU Faculty/Staff may not share hotel rooms with students (graduate or undergraduate).

### **3.3 Lodging Other-Than-Hotel (Airbnb, VRBO, apartments, dorms, etc.)**

- Must be a licensed business that regularly offers lodging services to the general public.
- May be used if there is a cost savings (including cleaning fees) to the University. This cost savings should be determined by the department. Quotes are **not** required for audit by Travel Services.
- Itemized receipt in the traveler's name is required.
- It generally is unacceptable for MSU employees to share lodging with students. More specifically, faculty and staff may not share lodging with undergraduate or graduate students, and graduate students acting in their capacity as university employees (for example, as teaching assistants) may not share lodging with undergraduates they supervise or instruct.
- Employees may seek a waiver (Lodging Waiver Form under Forms tab) of these restrictions from the Office of Compliance and Risk Management (OCRM) prior to traveling. Waivers will not be granted for sharing of a single hotel room and will be granted only for good cause for sharing of larger spaces such as rental houses. Waivers also will not be granted retroactively if requested after travel has occurred. If you are uncertain whether your arrangement complies with these requirements, you should contact Brett Harvey, Director of Federal Regulatory Compliance at [brett.harvey@msstate.edu](mailto:brett.harvey@msstate.edu) before booking to clarify whether a waiver is required and/or available.

## **4. Privately-Owned Vehicle Mileage**

State officers and employees traveling on official state business in their private vehicles will be reimbursed at the same rate federal employees are reimbursed.

The employee's acceptance of the User Electronic Agreement and department head/next higher administrator approval serve as declaration of:

- Availability of an MSU vehicle
- Appropriate rate used
- Mileage claimed is directly related to MSU business

**NOTE: It is the responsibility of the department to verify the point-to-point mileage. The Office of Travel Services is not held responsible for false claims.**

#### 4.1 Out-of-State Travel

- It is the responsibility of the department to complete the MSU A-09 <https://www.travel.msstate.edu/forms/index.php> when the distance traveled in a privately-owned vehicle exceeds 250 miles from his/her official duty station. The MSU A-09 requires a comparison between the total cost of driving and the total cost of flying. If total cost of driving exceeds total cost of flying, reimbursement will be limited to lowest unrestricted airfare unless the department can justify was in the best interest of MSU.

**NOTE: This comparison is only required when mileage reimbursement is going to be claimed. Travel Services does not require a copy of this form. It should be kept on file within the department.**

#### 4.2 Traveling with Others

When two or more employees are traveling together in a privately-owned vehicle, the individual who owns the vehicle should claim the mileage for reimbursement. Under no circumstances should the mileage be split between multiple travelers.

#### 4.3 Insurance and Accidents

- **Liability Insurance**  
The university provides automobile liability insurance (liability only) to MSU employees operating a privately-owned vehicle within the course and scope of their job duties.
- **Physical Damage Insurance**  
MSU does not provide physical damage insurance or reimbursement for deductibles or out-of-state pocket repairs for a privately-owned vehicle. Employees who utilize a privately-owned vehicle as part of their university travel should ensure the vehicle has appropriate physical damage insurance coverage. The cost of such insurance is included in the standard mileage rate.
- **Accident Reporting**  
Report all vehicle accidents as soon as possible online at [ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident](http://ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident). Notify Eric Wilder in the Office of Compliance and Risk Management immediately if an accident results in medical treatment to any party involved at 662-325-6820 or [eric.wilder@msstate.edu](mailto:eric.wilder@msstate.edu).

## 5. Rental Vehicle

Rental vehicles are reimbursable travel expenses if incurred while conducting MSU business. The University **will not** reimburse for rental vehicles obtained for personal use.

An intermediate rental vehicle is the largest rental that will be reimbursed without justification. When there is a situation in which a larger vehicle is required, a written statement should be entered as a comment within the expense report.

### 5.1 Receipt requirements

- Rental vehicle receipts
  - FINAL receipt required – rental agreements received when picking up the vehicle are not acceptable.
  - In traveler's name
  - Itemized
  - Date
  - Amount paid
- Rental gas receipts
  - Itemized
  - Date
  - Amount paid

**NOTE: If a traveler prepays for gas, Travel Services will accept the prepaid receipt for reimbursement. The date and amount paid are still required. It is the department's responsibility to verify that the traveler did not receive any money back after pumping gas.**

### 5.2 Incidentals

- Reimbursable
  - Fuel Service Option (FSO)
  - Global Positioning System (GPS)
- Non-reimbursable
  - Personal Accident Insurance (PAI)
  - Supplemental Liability Insurance (SLI) – unless required by law for international rentals
  - Car seats

### 5.3 15 Passenger Vans

Any questions regarding MSU's stance on renting 15 passenger vans should go to Eric Wilder, 662-325-6820.

### 5.4 Insurance and Accidents

- Liability Insurance

Travelers renting vehicles should decline liability coverage in all circumstances offered by the rental agency, unless required by law for international rentals. The University provides automobile liability insurance (liability only) to MSU employees operating a rental vehicle within the course and scope of their job duties.

- Physical Damage Insurance

The Travel Services website provides a list of State vehicle contracts available to the University, which include physical damage insurance, also called Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)/Loss Damage Waiver (LDW) coverage. Travelers renting vehicles on the State contracts should decline the CDW/LDW coverage or waivers offered for an additional fee. Traveler should make sure to use MSU's corporate contract number at the time of rental to utilize the State contract and insurance benefits.

When it becomes necessary to rent a vehicle without utilizing a State contract, traveler should use an MSU VISA Travel Card when possible, which will provide physical damage insurance equivalent to CDW/LDW coverage provided by the rental agency at no cost (domestic only). If using a personal credit card to rent a domestic rental vehicle or international rental vehicle, the traveler may purchase CDW/LDW coverage from the rental agency.

If physical damage is not provided using one of the methods above, then the University's automobile insurance will provide physical damage coverage at no additional cost for rental vehicles subject to a \$1,000 deductible payable by the department.

- Accident Reporting

Report all vehicle accidents as soon as possible online at [ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident](http://ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident). Notify Eric Wilder in the Office of Compliance and Risk Management immediately if an accident results in medical treatment to any party involved at 662-325-6820 or [eric.wilder@msstate.edu](mailto:eric.wilder@msstate.edu).

**NOTE: If you are traveling by public carrier (air, train, bus), all travel reservations, including rental vehicle, should be booked through ALTOUR.**

## 6. Public Carrier

### 6.1 ALTOUR

Public carrier is defined as a commercial airline, train, or interstate bus line carrier. Due to the contract between ALTOUR and MSU, travelers are required to make all travel arrangements (transportation, lodging, and rental vehicles) through ALTOUR when traveling by public carrier.

**NOTE: It is the use of public carrier that triggers the need for booking through ALTOUR. If there are any changes to reservations needed after hours, call ALTOUR at 1-866-297-9293. There is a fee associated with each call -- \$20.00 domestic and \$30.00 international.**

A copy of the final itinerary is required when requesting reimbursement. It should include:

- Public carrier confirmation
- Public carrier payment (payment information box)
- Lodging confirmation if applicable to trip
- Rental vehicle confirmation if applicable to trip

Booking outside of ALTOUR is not encouraged but is reimbursable if there is a minimum of \$25.00 cost savings to MSU. Savings is proven by providing a quote from ALTOUR with the same dates, airports, times, and cities as actual travel.

It is the traveler's responsibility to obtain cancellation notices from ALTOUR. All itineraries should be included in the expense report.

Early advances are not permissible for public carrier (airfare, train, bus) when booked on a personal credit card. This includes bookings through ALTOUR. The University has an Employee Business Travel Account (EBTA) to cover airfare costs in advance for travelers.

In-flight internet is reimbursable with an itemized receipt. If flight exceeds six hours, MSU will reimburse for business class seating.

### 6.2 Taxi/Shuttle

- Receipts required when expense is more than \$10.00.
- No more than 20% tip may be reimbursed.
  - How to calculate 20% of taxi expense
  - Example:
    - Amount paid – tip amount = fare amount
    - Fare amount x 0.2 = reimbursable tip amount



Fare amount + reimbursable tip amount = allowable expense

- $\$45.60 - \$12.00 = \$33.60$   
 $\$33.60 \times 0.2 = \$6.72$   
 $\$33.60 + \$6.72 = \$40.32$  allowable expense

**NOTE: It is the department's responsibility to verify that taxi/shuttle expenses claimed are for MSU business.**

## 7. State-Owned Vehicle

Actual operating expenses incurred while conducting MSU business in a state-owned vehicle will be reimbursed.

Reimbursable expenses (all require an itemized receipt):

- Gas
- Oil
- Tires
- Maintenance/repairs

### Insurance and Accidents

- Liability Insurance  
The University provides automobile liability insurance (liability only) to MSU employees operating a University-owned vehicle within the course and scope of their job duties.
- Physical Damage Insurance  
The University does not carry physical damage insurance for non-specialty University-owned vehicles. Departments are responsible for all damage and repair costs associated with operating a University-owned vehicle. A department may purchase physical damage insurance for University-owned specialty vehicles by contacting the Office of Compliance and Risk Management at 662-325-6820 or [eric.wilder@msstate.edu](mailto:eric.wilder@msstate.edu).
- Accident Reporting  
Reporting all vehicle accidents as soon as possible online at [ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident](http://ocrm.msstate.edu/reporting/auto-accident). Notify Eric Wilder in the Office of Compliance and Risk Management immediately if an accident results in medical treatment to any party involved at 662-325-6820 or [eric.wilder@msstate.edu](mailto:eric.wilder@msstate.edu).

**NOTE: Mileage is not reimbursable to the traveler when traveling in a state-owned vehicle.**

## 8. Other Travel Costs

**Any expenses \$10.00 or less do not require a receipt for reimbursement. If multiple \$10.00 expenses claimed on one reimbursement, an explanation of expenses is required.**

### 8.1 Parking:

- Airport, hotel, lot, valet, etc. In excess of \$10.00, itemized receipt required.

### 8.2 Tolls:

- In excess of \$10.00, itemized receipt required.

### 8.3 Laundry:

- One expense per seven days permissible. More frequently, justification required.
- In excess of \$10.00, itemized receipt required.

### 8.4 Tips:

- Maid tips: reimbursable up to \$5.00/night
- Meal tips: Total meals tips shall not exceed 20% of the maximum daily limitation. Refer to Meals section of policy for more information.
- Baggage handling tips - \$1.00/bag/leg of trip

### 8.5 Baggage:

- Baggage ticket or airline printout required

### 8.6 Business Meals:

- Meal expense must be directly related to the active conduct of the University's business.
- Meal must be during or directly before or after a substantial business discussion.
- Itemized receipt and C-4 form required
- No alcohol or associated taxes reimbursable
- No more than 20% tip reimbursable

### 8.7 Registration:

- On-site registrations more than \$10.00, itemized receipt required.
- If a conference requires that its fees be paid in advance, this should be handled via ProCard or Direct Pay. **The Office of Travel Services will no longer provide an advance for conference registration.**
- Itemized receipt required
- No membership dues/t-shirts
- Workshops permissible

## 9. Travel Advances

The only expenses eligible for a cash advance are meals while in travel status. In lieu of a cash advance, MSU employees are encouraged to request an MSU Travel Card to minimize out-of-pocket expenses. Hotels, taxi services, and registration fees are allowable expenses to be paid on an MSU Travel Card. Please review the Travel Card Application and/or Travel Card Guidelines for a complete list of card eligible expenses.

If an MSU employee needs to request a cash advance, he/she must do so in writing, explaining the need and have approval from the appropriate Department Head, Dean or Director, and Vice President. It is required to use the sample letter on MSU Travel Services website (Forms tab > Cash Advance Justification Letter).

**\* MSU students cannot apply for an MSU Travel Card; therefore, they are able to obtain a cash advance for eligible out-of-pocket travel expenses without the justification letter.\***

### 9.1 Requirements for Advance Eligibility

- Must be MSU employee or student
- Cannot request less than \$200.00
- Receipts are required per State law for **ALL** expenses when a cash advance is received, including meals.
- Must have an overnight stay
- Must be prior to the trip. Travelers are not eligible for travel advances once in travel status.
- Travelers may not have more than one outstanding travel advance at one time.
- Airfare, registration, and hotel expenses are not eligible expenses for advances for employees.
  - Airfare should be paid for via the EBTA process (employee or student).
  - Registration can be paid on an MSU Travel Card, ProCard, or Direct Pay (employee or student).
  - Students may request cash advances for hotel expenses since they are not eligible for an MSU Travel Card.
- Group travel
  - A list of MSU group members should be included.

### 9.2 Receiving a Travel Advance

- Can only be received through a completed and approved request in Concur.
  - Request Header tab > Cash Advance section
  - Enter the advance amount and a comment
  - Attach the approved justification letter that has been signed by all parties (requesting employee, appropriate Department Head, Dean or Director, and Vice President).

- If booking in Concur, the advance will come to Travel Services for approval when the booking is complete.

**Domestic travel is to be submitted to Travel Services no later than 5 business days into the month following the trip end date.**

- **Example: Trip ends March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The expense report and supporting documentation are due to Travel Services by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.**

## **10. Employee Business Travel Account (EBTA)**

The purpose of the Employee Business Travel Account (EBTA) is to prepay airfare expenses for employees and students who book through ALTOUR.

### **10.1 How to charge airfare to the EBTA:**

Complete request and obtain proper approvals.

- Self-booked in Concur Travel: Select EBTA account (6294) as payment method when booking.
- Agency booked: provide ALTOUR a copy of the approved request for booking.
- Once the booking is completed, the airfare and ALTOUR booking fee will be charged to the EBTA. Upon return from the trip, look within Available Expenses on the home page of Concur for the airfare and booking fee transactions. Select to add these transactions to your expense report. This is how the department is charged for these expenses.

## **11. Business Travel Expense (BTE)**

The Business Travel Expense (BTE) account is used to pay for airfare for non-MSU individuals or MSU group travel (students or employees of MSU).

### **11.1 Non-MSU (participants, interview candidates, and student recruits)**

The department contact will contact ALTOUR to obtain an airfare quote.

1. Send to Travel Services ([travelhelp@msstate.edu](mailto:travelhelp@msstate.edu)):
  - a. BTE form
  - b. MSU A-08 form
  - c. Airfare quote
2. Travel Services will contact ALTOUR to verify airfare ticket amount and authorize ALTOUR to purchase.

## 11.2 MSU Group Travel

1. The department contact will contact ALTOUR to obtain an airfare quote.
2. Send to Travel Services ([travelhelp@msstate.edu](mailto:travelhelp@msstate.edu)):
  - a. BTE form
  - b. Airfare quotes
  - c. Copy of group leader's MSU A-03/A-04
  - d. List of participating names and MSU ID numbers (9-digit numbers)

BTE travel for consultants should include a copy of the P&C 322 and HRM 323 forms. These forms can be found here:

<https://www.procurement.msstate.edu/procurement/forms/index.php>.

## 12. International Travel

International travel is any travel that takes place outside of the continental United States. Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Canada are considered international. Alaska is considered domestic.

Prior approvals on a Request in Concur from the Department Head, Dean/Director, International Institute, Research Compliance, Vice President, and President are required at least 30 days before departure.

- Employees:  
A completed MSU A-04 and Assumption of Risk & Release Form (if applicable) should be attached to the Request prior to submitting for approval.
- General Graduate & Undergraduate Students (OTHER than study abroad):  
A completed **MSU A-04S** (new form for students only) and Assumption of Risk & Release Form (if applicable) should be attached to the Request prior to submitting for approval. If the student does not have access to Concur (not on payroll for any department on campus), he/she will need to complete an MSU A-04 (original form) and Release for Student Travel form from the International Institute.

NOTE: MSU Form A-04 was significantly updated in April 2021 to improve the safety and security of MSU international travel & be more compatible with Concur. A new MSU Form A-04S was created for general student travel. Please be sure to use the current form.

**Per MSU OP 60.01, prior to travel, faculty and staff must route the MSU Form A-04/MSU Form A-04S to the International Institute for review and sign an "Assumption of Risk and Release Form" if required. See the MSU International Travel Security Guidelines noted below.**

## 12.1 International Travel Security Guidelines

The International Institute is responsible for upholding the travel security guidelines for MSU faculty, staff, and students participating in an international travel experience whether for a conference, research activity, program development, study abroad, experiential learning, or any other academic or business-related travel either sponsored or affiliated with MSU. The intent is to promote and protect the safety and security of our MSU family.

MSU utilizes the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Travel Advisory system to assess risks associated with international travel. The system provides clear, timely, and reliable safety information about every country in the world. Each country is assigned a Travel Advisory Level 1-4 for the country as a whole (listed below). The advisory report for a country may also apply varying levels of advisories for specific locations or regions within a country. For example, a Level 2 country could have cities or regions with Level 3 or 4 ratings.

- Level 1: Exercise normal precautions
- Level 2: Exercise increased caution
- Level 3: Reconsider travel
- Level 4: Do not travel

More information regarding the Travel Advisory system is found at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>

Based on the U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory System, the following MSU international travel guidelines apply.

1. **MSU will not approve university travel to a Level 4 country or region unless that rating is based solely on the COVID-19 pandemic.**
2. **Countries and regions within countries designated as Level 3 are considered elevated-risk regions. Travel to Level 3 regions is discouraged and requires a risk assessment and additional documentation stating safety procedures are in place for the trip prior to approval.**
  - a. **All travel by faculty, staff, and students to Level 3 regions will require signature on an “Assumption of Risk and Release Form” prior to travel.**
  - b. While University affiliated travel to elevated-risk regions (Level 3) is generally prohibited, faculty or staff planning a student program to an elevated-risk region or who wish to travel to an elevated-risk region for research or other purposes may do so by providing adequate documentation to the International Institute that: (1) summarizes the major risks of travel to the proposed area, (2) indicates ways in which the faculty leaders can mitigate those travel risks, (3) demonstrates the travel has extraordinary academic or research value, and (4) shows that travel to an alternative location would not provide a comparable experience.
  - c. Similarly, **any student or student group** planning to travel on their own to elevated-risk regions through a university affiliated program may do so by providing adequate documentation to the International Institute that: (1) summarizes the major risks of travel to the proposed area, (2) indicates ways in which the student

can mitigate those travel risks, (3) demonstrates the travel has extraordinary academic or research value, and (4) shows that travel to an alternative location would not provide a comparable experience.

- d. The decision regarding whether to grant an exemption and allow travel to a Level 3 region is within the sole discretion of University administration. If approved, then all MSU faculty, staff, and students traveling must: (1) sign an “Assumption of Risk and Release Form” indicating that he or she acknowledges and fully assumes all risk related to the travel and the University will bear no responsibility for evacuation in the event of a crisis or emergency.
  - e. The “Assumption of Risk & Release Form” may be signed digitally or by hand. This should be done by the traveler and not his/her delegate. Typed names will not be accepted as valid signatures.
3. All international travel by student groups who are accompanied or led by MSU faculty or staff must route through the International Institute for insurance, tracking, and security purposes. Faculty should contact the International Institute for details as soon as group travel is being considered.
  4. All travelers should enroll in the U.S. Department of State’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Enrolling in STEP provides free, electronic travel advisories on safety conditions for their international destination(s). This service provides traveler trip information to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country or countries of travel, allowing the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to assist travelers in the event of an emergency.
  5. All faculty and staff must leave a copy of their individual or group travel itinerary with their designated departmental travel manager.
  6. Upon final approval of Concur travel request, all faculty and staff (including graduate assistants and student workers in paid status) are automatically enrolled in the University’s international travel accident insurance program (more information on the insurance program, including limits and exclusions, can be found on OCRM’s website). The International Institute covers the cost of international travel accident insurance for all faculty and staff.
  7. Students enrolled as program participants in a University affiliated program registered with the International Institute will be enrolled in the University’s international travel accident insurance program (more information on the insurance program, including limits and exclusions, can be found on OCRM’s website). The cost of student international travel accident insurance will be billed to student accounts by the International Institute or department hosting the trip.
  8. Faculty and staff traveling with a University laptop or other device, should contact ORED/FSO at 325-8682 regarding data encryption or participation in the Laptop Loan Program, providing clean laptops for travel.
  9. To mitigate risk when traveling, keep a low profile and avoid attracting attention to yourself. Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Take the time to learn about the

country/countries or region/regions to be visited and what is or is not allowed culturally and legally.

## **12.2 Exchange Rates**

**It is recommended to use a credit card when traveling internationally. The conversions are automatically calculated on the card statement. Use of a card statement overrules any need for further conversion. It is also preferable to pay in local currency when using a credit card internationally. When given the option by an international vendor to pay in US Dollar at the time of the transaction, decline this option. Your credit card company will charge you less than the vendor, and you may avoid hidden fees.**