



# Montana Operations Manual

## Policy

Category

Travel

Effective Date

10/01/2016

Last Revised

10/03/2018

Issuing Authority

Department of Administration  
Director's Office

### Lodging Rates

#### I. Purpose

This policy establishes acceptable lodging rates for state employees traveling on official business.

#### II. Scope

This policy applies to all state agencies and institutions, excluding community colleges. For additional travel information, see the [Employee Travel](#) webpage. A link to the Employee Travel webpage is located on the State of Montana MINE site under the Services dropdown menu.

#### III. Policy Overview

Lodging expenses should be kept as low as possible, while also being practical, and the agency/employee must attempt to receive the lowest available lodging rate at commercial lodging facilities. The employee should request the lodging facility's best rate. In Montana, the best lodging rate offered may be the state rate, and for out-of-state lodging, the best rate may be a government rate. However, employees must be cautious when they accept the state or government rate, as the lodging facility may have a standard customer rate, or other discounted rate (such as AAA, AARP, or Sam's Club) that is less than the state or government rate.

Upon check-in, an employee must be prepared to show a picture identification that identifies them as a Montana state employee. The employee is not required to show their state identification if the facility does not ask for it. If a lodging facility will not offer rates at or below the state rate (or government rate for out-of-state lodging facilities), an employee cannot demand this rate. The recourse is to search for an alternative lodging facility.

If an employee is traveling from in-state to out-of-state, and vice versa, the geographical location of the lodging facility determines the applicable reimbursement; that is, if the employee stays in-state, in-state rates apply, and if they stay out-of-state, out-of-state rates apply.

The employee shall receive reimbursement for their actual out-of-pocket lodging expenses, excluding taxes, up to the maximum amounts set by [2-18-501](#), MCA. The Department of Administration (DOA) is authorized by 2-18-501(3), MCA, to designate the locations and circumstances under which the actual cost of lodging may be claimed when the actual cost exceeds the maximum lodging reimbursement rates.

To claim lodging reimbursement, the original receipt from a licensed lodging facility must be attached to the agency's travel claim form or the travel expense voucher available on

the [Employee Travel](#) webpage. Other receipts, such as credit card receipts, are not acceptable. (See Section V for additional information regarding what constitutes an appropriate receipt in a remote, or under-developed foreign location.)

Any employee traveling overnight to conduct official state business, who is accompanied by a person that is not conducting official state business (e.g., their spouse or family), shall only claim lodging reimbursement for the employee. The facility's rate for a single-occupant must be noted and marked as such on the receipt.

#### IV. Lodging Within the Continental United States

For travel within the continental United States, lodging per diem rates are based on federal per diem rates established by the General Services Administration (GSA). Rates go into effect each October 1st.

##### A. In-State Lodging

The maximum in-state lodging rate is set by statute at \$35 per night; however, lodging rates in Montana may be reimbursed at actual cost, not to exceed the federal rates. The following tables show lodging rates for Montana counties as listed on the federal [GSA website](#). The standard federal rate is the lodging rate, exclusive of taxes, that applies to all counties not specifically listed in the tables. All locations within a high-cost county receive the higher per diem rate. However, agency directors have the discretion to maintain travel expenses within the agency's appropriation level by limiting the high-cost reimbursement rates to only those primary destinations that are included as high-cost locations.

**Table 1. Rates for October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019**

Primary Destination	County	Maximum Lodging Rate
Standard Rate	Applies to all locations without specified rates	\$ 94
Big Sky / West Yellowstone – High-Cost	Gallatin	October 1 - May 31 \$95 June 1 - September 30 \$160
Helena – High-Cost	Lewis and Clark	\$101
Missoula / Polson / Kalispell – High-Cost	Missoula / Lake / Flathead	October 1 - June 30 \$ 95 July 1 - August 31 \$146 September 1 - 30 \$95

##### B. Out-of-State Lodging

Section 2-18-501(2), MCA, provides that lodging outside the state, but within the continental U.S., must be reimbursed at actual cost, exclusive of taxes, not to exceed the prescribed maximum standard federal rate per day for the location involved. The federal per diem rates can be accessed on the GSA website. If the destination city is not listed but the county is, the lodging rate listed applies to the entire county.

### **C. Exceptions When Actual Cost Exceeds the Federal Rate**

The agency director, or designated approving authority, may provide prior approval of lodging reimbursement at actual cost under the following circumstances when actual cost exceeds the federal rates:

1. Lodging at or below federal rates is temporarily unavailable due to special functions such as fairs, sporting events, conventions, or seasonal demand;
2. There is a shortage of available lodging facilities that agree to accept federal rates at the destination site;
3. Federal rates, or rates significantly lower than a conference hotel rate, are not available at another lodging facility within a reasonable distance from the site where business activities are to occur. (Consider the cost of ground transportation and the employee's safety or convenience walking to alternative lodging facilities.);
4. It is necessary for purposes of accessibility and/or security for the employee to stay at the hotel or near the site where the conference or meeting the employee is attending is being held;
5. Emergency travel arrangements prevent finding accommodations at or below federal per diem rates;
6. Remote locations with limited accommodations within a 15-mile radius prevent finding accommodations at or below federal per diem rates; or
7. An employee in a regulatory or undercover function, with reasonable cause to believe there is risk to his/her personal safety if identified as a government employee, is exempt from requesting the federal lodging rates.

The employee must provide adequate justification with the original lodging receipt to the director or designated approving authority. The justification must also indicate that reimbursement at actual cost is within the agency's appropriation level. The Request for Reimbursement of Lodging at Actual Cost form can be found on the [Employee Travel](#) webpage.

### **V. Foreign Lodging**

Section 2-18-501(4), MCA, provides that an employee conducting official state business in a foreign country must be reimbursed \$155 USD per night for lodging. When the actual cost of foreign lodging exceeds \$155 USD per night, the DOA authorizes foreign lodging reimbursement claims at the [lodging per diem rates](#) established by the U.S. Department of State. If the actual cost of foreign lodging exceeds the federal per diem rates, the agency director, or designated approving authority, may provide prior approval of lodging reimbursement at actual costs. The employee must provide adequate justification with the original lodging receipt to the director or designated approving authority. The justification must indicate that reimbursement at actual cost is within the agency's appropriation level. The Request for Reimbursement of Lodging at Actual Cost form can be found on the DOA [Employee Travel](#) webpage.

All claims for foreign lodging must be documented by an appropriate receipt, typically defined as the original receipt from a licensed lodging facility. However, in some foreign countries, particularly in less developed areas or where a language barrier exists, a receipt may not be provided. In this situation, the employee should attempt to obtain the

most appropriate type of documentation. This document should describe the services, accommodations, or supplies received and their business purpose; the date of the transaction; and the amount and currency in which the transaction was conducted. This document should bear some mark (signature or other) made by the supplier as certification that the transaction occurred as recorded. If the employee or another person completed this documentation on behalf of the supplier, this preparer should also sign (or mark) the document with their signature.

#### **VI. Non-receiptable Lodging**

If an employee stays overnight at a site other than a commercial, non-receiptable lodging facility (e.g., with friends or relatives or in a tent, camper, or trailer), the employee may claim \$12 per night for lodging expenses. However, when overnight accommodations are provided at the expense of a government entity, reimbursement may not be claimed for lodging.