

# **Divisions of Field Operations and Project Delivery**

## **Guidance on Reimbursement for a Meal when Lodging Expense is not Incurred**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Revised May 6, 2024

#### **1) What is the regularly scheduled workday?**

The regularly scheduled workday will be the hours on the employee's position description, 8:00 AM-4:30 PM with a ½ hour lunch or 8:00 AM-5:00 PM with an hour lunch.

#### **2) Can the regularly scheduled workday change?**

Yes. During a SNICE event or other emergency event, such as flagging for flooding, if the crew (including employees assigned to the crew such as an ET) is put on 12-hour shifts that will be their regularly scheduled workday. In addition, if a crew is put on 10-hour days for the summer or a special project, that will be their regularly scheduled workday.

#### **3) Does the entire work location need to be more than 30 miles from the employee's official station?**

Yes. Work activities, excluding travel to get to the work location, must be more than 30 miles from the employee's official station. If a portion of the work activities for the workday are within 30 miles of the employee's official station, the employee is not eligible for a meal reimbursement. For example, during a SNICE event, routes plowed must be 30 miles from the official station. If an assigned route for the day is within 30 miles, the employee would not be eligible. In addition, if a construction project work activity for the day starts or ends within 30 miles of the official station, the employee would not be eligible for a meal reimbursement.

#### **4) If a Construction or Maintenance employee is loaned out to another Area, does the meal reimbursement apply if they are not out on lodging expenses?**

Yes. If the requirements of working 3 or more hours past their regularly scheduled workday and all work activities are more than 30 miles from their official station are met. All employees, Construction and Maintenance, working 12-hour shifts during a SNICE or other emergency event will have to work 15 hours to meet the requirements threshold.

#### **5) Does the employee need to provide the actual time worked during the day? Example 6 AM – 8 PM with a 30 min lunch.**

Yes. The employee will need to give the details of the hours he or she worked for the day. Since in the above situation the employee worked past 6 PM, he or she should state whether they took a dinner break. On projects late in the day the employee may not take 30 minutes to eat dinner because they want to finish up for the day. The employee may eat on the way home. By stating no "dinner break taken" it will be clear and the documentation on the expense report will match the hours entered on their time sheet.

**6) The guidance states” it is allowable for the employee to eat this meal on the way home from their official station”, is this time reflected on the employee’s time sheet?**

No. At the end of the day in most situations the employee wants to finish up for the day and may not take a dinner meal break. He or she may grab something on the way home after leaving the office. A meal reimbursement is allowed for dinner if the employee worked past 6:00 PM. As an example, the employee worked 6:00 AM-7:00 PM. Work location 60 miles from the official station. The time sheet would reflect 12.5 hours worked, ½ hour lunch and no dinner break because they worked through dinner to get the day done. The employee could get reimbursed for dinner. The time after leaving the official station would be normal commute time and not reflected on the time sheet.

**7) Depending on the hours the employee worked, we would pay for the meal that makes sense?**

Yes. If an employee worked from 5 AM to 5:30 PM with a 30-minute lunch, then the meal to reimburse would be lunch. You cannot pay for the dinner because the employee did not work past 6 PM and if it was pulled for an audit, it would be a finding.

**8) When is says that hours must be worked continuously – Is this referring to an employee leaving work for an appointment?**

This would be a rare occasion. The work location must be 30 miles from the official station. At a minimum there would probably be 2 hours taken out of the day to go to an appointment. If an employee met the thresholds of actual work time of 3 hours beyond their regularly scheduled workday with mealtimes and the appointment time taken out and the entire day’s work was at a work location 30 miles from their work location, then yes, they could be reimbursed a meal.

**9) What is meant by the statement “Hours worked must be continuous”?**

If an employee worked 8:00 AM-4:30 PM and was called back and worked from 7:00 PM-11:00 PM because of an emergency, the employee would have more than 3 hours of work over their regularly scheduled workday but would not be eligible for a meal reimbursement. The employee had an opportunity to eat a meal during the break in work hours.

**10) What is meant by the last statement on “above what an employee would supply in a normal workday”?**

In a normal workday, an employee would provide themselves with a meal for lunch, 8-hour workday with a 30 minute or hour lunch. When an employee works an extended day, 3 or more hours beyond their regularly scheduled day, then it is expected that the employee has a cost to provide themselves with two meals.

**11) Are temporary employees allowed to receive a meal reimbursement if the requirements are met?**

Yes. It would probably be a rare occasion. The definition of an employee in the Department of Administration Travel Handbook includes persons intermittently employed which would be our temporary employees.

**12) Will the District Engineer have to sign off on all the requests for meal reimbursement including at the Area level or can it be delegated to the District Construction Engineer for all Construction employees and the District Maintenance Engineer for all Maintenance employees?**

**The District Engineer will not have to sign off on all requests.** The guidance document states that the approval will be made by the same process as all other travel reimbursements. The District Engineer will approve if the request is made by someone they directly supervise.