



# Travel Update

October 2006

State of Utah  
Department of Administrative Services  
Division of Finance  
[www.finance.utah.gov](http://www.finance.utah.gov)

A newsletter for state government travelers and travel planners

## Changes to Group Gathering Policy

The current Group Gathering policy has undergone an extensive review over the past several months. The revised policy is now final and we appreciate the input we received from agencies during this process. The highlights of the changes made are listed below:

- If the estimated cost of the Group Gathering is \$1,000 or less, the agency will not be required to prepare an FI 58 Group Gathering Authorization form. In addition, the agency may select the best source without seeking competitive bids.
- If both lodging and food per diem rates are accepted by the facility, then no further bids are required and the State Travel Office does not need to approve the FI 58 Group Gathering Authorization form. It will still need to be approved by the department director or designee and by the department budget officer.
- The policy now applies to all attendees, not just employees. The policy does apply to board meetings.
- The policy applies to any group gathering paid by the state, regardless of the source of funds.
- The two night limit on lodging is eliminated except for management retreats.
- The every other year limit on lodging is eliminated, except for management retreats.
- The 50 mile in excess of an employee's normal commute requirement was retained. However, attendees with administrative or training duties may be lodged if necessary without having to meet the 50 mile limit.
- Executive directors will now have the ability to allow an exemption to the lodging requirements section of the policy as long as the exception is documented.

Based on our post-audits and on recent exemption requests, we have found that the group gathering policy is very important. Without restrictions and guidance, these functions could get out of control very easily. Remember that even with the new flexibility for the executive directors, it is their responsibility to ensure that any exception is necessary and reasonable and in the best interest of the state.

The revised Group Gathering Policy (FIACCT 04-11.00) is effective as of October 1, 2006 and will be published in the State Accounting Policies and Procedures publication posted on the Finance website by the end of October. A pdf file of the complete policy is currently available at <http://www.finance.utah.gov>.

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## Weighty Matters

Continental Airlines has banned travelers from checking heavyweight bags. Under a new policy, the Houston-based carrier will no longer allow fliers to check any bag weighing more than 70 pounds. Continental is the first major US-based carrier to turn away bags with the 70 pound weight limit but other carriers are expected to follow suit.

## Passport Deadline Extended



A crisis may have been avoided when the US Congress agreed to extend the deadline for passports for visitors from the Western Hemisphere, a move termed a great victory by heavy-lobbying tourism representatives. “A major crisis has been averted,” said Jim Santini, legislative counsel for the National Tour Association (NTA). “This is a great victory for North American tourism.

After intensive lobbying, Congress extended the deadline from January 1, 2008 to June 1, 2009 when passports must be presented by travelers from Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean.

“This action recognizes the need to provide a common sense extension of the current deadline and to continue our pursuit of the often difficult balance between securing our borders and free and open commerce,” said Jonathan Tisch, chairman of the Travel Business Roundtable and CEO of Loews Hotels.

The move also provides “additional time to fully educate travelers here in the US and neighboring countries on this change of law,” said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the Travel Industry

Association (TIA). He said the extension would help homeland security while at the same time preserve access to the US for tens of millions of cruise and land visitors. The extra time will give officials a chance to study an economical alternative to a passport called a PASScard, he added.

Officials of the cruise industry were particularly concerned about the action because it would require American cruisers to carry a passport on Caribbean, Mexican and Canadian cruises.

The Bush Administration last year announced plans for what is now called the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. These new requirements were expected to be in place by January 1, 2008, and were called for in legislation approved in 2004 by Congress. Since that time NTA and its industry partners have been challenging the passport mandate. The industry has been citing disruption to cross-border travel in return for negligible security gain. *(This article was originally published on TravelMole.com)*

## FYI

***The national average ticket price during the first half of 2006 for a domestic flight was \$464.55***

***The State Travel Office average ticket price for a domestic flight during the same time period was \$350.42***

## AirPortal™

**AirPortal™** is Christopherson Business Travel's new application that will allow you to manage your entire travel profile from one simple login. Within AirPortal™ you will have access to the following tools:

- \* My Unused Tickets – view all of your unused tickets so that you can re-apply them to your new reservations when applicable.
- \* My Itineraries – view all of your past and future itineraries. Your booked itineraries are all listed for you under My Itineraries.
- \* Manage a Single Travel Profile – manage your personal travel information.
- \* My Christopherson Business Travel's Contacts – Quickly find contact information to your personal travel agent, account manager and other technology support personnel.



Folks from Christopherson are currently creating individual profiles for each travel planner and traveler working for the State and updating these profiles to reflect any current information on file. They expect to have this information into AirPortal™ by mid-October. When the input of these profiles is complete, you will receive an email from Christopherson Business Travel with login information and instructions on how to use this product.

If you have any questions regarding AirPortal™ you may call any of the travel agents in the State Travel Office.

## Chase Travel Mastercard Payments



Individual account holders should make sure payments are made to the following address:

Commercial Card Solutions  
P O Box 4471  
Carol Stream, IL 60197-4471

You may also make payments electronically by using your user id and going into the electronic statement area at [www.paymentnet.com](http://www.paymentnet.com). You will need to set up an account specifying your bank and account information and then you may manage your account at your own convenience.

You may also pay over the phone by calling JPM Chase customer service at 1-800-270-7760. This number is printed on the back of the credit card. Press 0 for a live person. Be prepared to give check routing and account information to the customer service representative.

The Chase Bank tellers have been taking payments but this should be the last choice because Chase Bank is really not prepared to take the corporate commercial card payments. *If you make your payment at the bank you should be prepared to wait a week or more before the account is credited, and be prepared to pay for your own late fee if applicable.*



## In-State Lodging Rates

The \$60.00 in-state hotel rate can be difficult to obtain in some areas. State travel policy allows travelers to reserve hotel rooms themselves when the facility is in the state and the state per diem rate is honored. Otherwise, all reservations must be made by the State Travel Office. If you do make your own reservations and are required to pay more than the per diem rate, you will only be reimbursed \$60.00 per night; however, if reservations are made through the State Travel Office, the full amount of the stay will be reimbursed.

The State will reimburse the actual cost up to \$60 plus tax, except in Moab, Cedar City, St. George, metropolitan Salt Lake City (Draper to Centerville), Ogden, Layton, Park City, Heber City, Tooele, Midway, and Provo/Orem. In these areas, the rates are:

- ▶ **Moab, Cedar City, St. George – \$65 plus tax**
- ▶ **Metropolitan Salt Lake City (Draper to Centerville), Park City, Heber City, Tooele, and Midway – \$68 plus tax**
- ▶ **Ogden, Layton, and Provo/Orem – \$63 plus tax**

## Make a *Fastbreak* to Your Budget Rental Car



number **T155600**.

Also, please remember to sign up for *Fastbreak*—a Budget express service that lets you skip the line and go directly to your car. When you sign up you will receive a RapidRez Number (BCN). Be sure to give your account number to the travel agent when

Budget Rent A Car is the primary car rental supplier for all out-of-state travel by state employees. Please book a Budget vehicle using the corporate discount

you book a car. On your first Fastbreak rental, you will need to stop at the counter to present the credit card and driver's license you provided on your enrollment form. After that, you won't have to stop again.

You may use this link <http://www.cendantcarrental.com/budget/fastbreak/index.html?T155600> to sign up now, or visit our web site at <http://finance.utah.gov> and click on the Travel tab. The Budget Fastbreak Express Service link is at the bottom of the car rental page.

## On the Clock



Just a reminder of how travel time is calculated for payroll.

- \* Normal commuting time from home to work and back shall not count towards hours worked.
  - \* Time employees spend traveling from one job site to another during the normal work schedule shall count towards hours worked.
  - \* Time employees spend traveling on a special one-day assignment shall count towards hours worked except mealtime and ordinary home to work travel.
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- \* Travel that keeps an employee away from home overnight does not count towards hours worked if it is time spent outside of regular working hours as a passenger on an airplane, train, boat, bus, or automobile.
  - \* Travel as a passenger counts toward hours worked if it is time spent during regular working hours. This applies to nonworking days, as well as regular working days. However, regular meal period time is not counted.

## Important Websites and Links



 <http://www.finance.utah.gov>

links to all state travel info

 <http://www.travel.state.gov>

up-to-date requirements for international travel

 <http://www.airwise.com>

information about flight arrivals and departures

 <http://www.visa-bility.com>

expidites process of obtaining visa and passport

 <http://waittime.tsa.dhs.gov/index.html>

security checkpoint wait times

## Who's Who in the State Travel Office



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# HELP!

*Emergency Line During Business Hours, 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday*

**801-537-9124**

*In-State Toll Free During Business Hours, 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday*

**800-358-1019**

*After Hours Emergency Hotline, Minimum \$8.75 per call*

**866-489-9834**