

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Air Travel Services/Travel Agent Services

Q **What are the air travel guidelines?**

A All airline tickets must be purchased using the contracted State Travel Card or Non-Employee Travel Card (NET). Personal credit cards are not to be used. All airline ticketing must be done through an authorized state travel agent contractor who will insure that ticketing is done in accordance with this policy. Exception to this contract shall only be made for an emergency; non contract fare saves over \$200 or more per round-trip ticket; and contract flights would require the traveler to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs.

Q **What are the city pair price agreements and benefits?**

A City pairs are airfares between two cities (for instance, New York to Buffalo is a city pair). The agreement is comprised of approximately 400 of the most traveled city pairs. One award is made to an airline for each city pair. The city pair contract lists one way fares and if an airline ticket is purchased the ticket is changeable and fully refundable. It will also allow for no minimum stay requirements and no advance purchase requirements. These benefits save the state a tremendous amount of money since travelers may change their ticket several times or may not even travel on their business trip. The airline city-pair contract is available at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/purchase/snt/awardnotes/7900621991can.htm>

Q **What are the airline discount price agreements?**

A An airline discount price agreement is a contractual agreement made between NYS and specific airlines that provide NYS Authorized Users with a percentage discount off various commercial fares. The ticket must be reserved and purchased through a NYS contracted travel agency to receive the discount. The contract exists with Southwest Airlines and is available at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/purchase/snt/awardnotes/7900622751can.HTM>

Q **What must I do first when I have been approved for travel?**

A Familiarize yourself with your agencies travel policies. You may be advised to contact an authorized New York State travel agency. The travel agent will be able to book your airfare, rail ticket, vehicle rental and hotel if required. They will also obtain the lowest New York State contract rate if applicable.

Q **Why is it recommended for my organization to use the Air Travel Services Contracts?**

A The buying power of the state is greatly enhanced by centralizing the air travel to just a few contractors. By using the contract, the state saves nearly \$16 million per year. Enforcement of the terms and conditions of the contract guarantees continued interest to bid from the airlines. It is essential that all customers work together to ensure the continuing success of the program, encouraging more competition and potentially greater savings.

Q **My flight is covered by the city pair agreement and the discount price agreement. Which one should I choose?**

A Travelers are instructed to book at the lowest cost option that meets their needs.

Q **What if I want to travel between two cities covered under one of the NYS Air Travel Services contracts but cannot use one of the contracted airlines?**

A You must use one of the contracts unless one of the following conditions apply:

- An emergency;
- Non-contract fare saves \$200 or more per round-trip ticket; and
- Contract flights would require the traveler to incur unnecessary overnight lodging costs.

If you meet the above requirements, an exception form must be completed. The exception form is found in the Air Travel Services Award. Contact your Agency Travel Coordinator or Finance Office for specific procedures as rules vary by agency. For most agencies this form will need to be completed through your Agency Travel Coordinator and signed by your Agency Finance Officer. A copy of that form must also be sent to the Statewide Travel Coordinator at travelcoordinator@ogs.ny.gov.

Q **What if I want to travel between two cities not covered under one of the NYS Air Travel Services contracts?**

A You must work with an Authorized Travel Agent Services contractor who will obtain the lowest fare that suits your needs. No exception form is needed in this case.

Q **Can I book an airline ticket on the Internet? Or can I book directly by calling my airline?**

A No. All reservations and ticketing must be booked through an authorized Travel Agent Services Contractor. If you find a low fare on the Internet or directly from the airline, check with one of the authorized Travel Agent Services contractors. In many instances, travel agencies are able to match these fares.

Q **Can I earn my frequent flier miles for contract airfares?**

A Yes. You can earn frequent flier miles when traveling on a contract airfare. However you cannot choose an airline based upon the frequent flier program. Participation in a frequent flier program must not influence employee flight selection that would result in travel from other than the contract air carrier. Also, accrual of frequent flier benefits is not an acceptable justification for air travel outside of the contract.

Q **What are "matched fares?"**

A After award, airlines that did not receive the State's contract award may offer matched or lower "state rates." A matched airfare is a rate that is less than or equal to the contract airline fare. It is offered only to state business travelers and not available to the general public. Use of these airfares is NOT a valid exception for travel with other than the contracted airline. When travelers do not use the contract airlines, the contract carrier does not receive the estimated usage upon which the bid price was calculated and may refuse to contract with the State in the future. If you are being offered a matched fare by one of the Travel Agent Services contractors, please notify the Statewide Travel Coordinator.

Q **Occasionally I find that there is no contract fare offered to a city to which I am traveling. Why is that?**

A The State tries diligently to have contracted fares covering frequently traveled routes. The state may not have enough travelers to that city to make it beneficial to have a State fare in that market. If you are finding that no state fare is available to a market you travel to frequently, please advise the Statewide Travel Coordinator of the situation. With sufficient interest, there may be an opportunity to add the market to the contract.

Q **Is the Air Travel Services contract for personal/vacation use?**

A No, the Air Travel Services contract is to be used solely for state business travel.

Q What are the payment method options for this contract? Can personal credit cards be used?

A All airline tickets must be purchased using the designated State Travel Cards. Employees may not use personal credit cards or other means for reimbursement.

Q My agency has its own procurement card. Can we use this card for Air Travel Services and Travel Agent Services?

A State Agencies cannot use the procurement card for purchasing travel services since they have access to the Travel Card or Non-Employee Travel Card (NET). However, non-state agencies can use the New York statewide contracted procurement card for purchasing travel services.

Q If a state agency is paying for somebody not employed by the state to travel for agency business, does the airfare for that individual qualify for the Air Travel Services contract rate?

A The Air Travel Services contract can be used by all New York State employees of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government including New York State public authorities, boards and SUNY. Select airlines have also extended the contract pricing to any or all of the following: New York City agencies, members of state boards, procurement councils, government witnesses, prisoners, runaways and wards of the state. Please see the current Air Travel Services contract for complete information detailing the airlines' electives.

Passenger Vehicle Rental

Q How does the Car Rental Program work?

A Through a joint agreement with the Western States Contracting Alliance, the state has secured discounted, contract rates with Enterprise Rent a Car, National Car Rental and Hertz Rent a Car. The Program Summary's contain the account code that must be provided to reservation agents in order to guarantee the state rates. Enterprise, Hertz and National have provided our users a variety of payment options.

Note: When renting a car from Enterprise, Hertz or National, be sure to inform them of the state's corporate number. This number will give the Enterprise, Hertz or National location you are renting from all of the information related to the States contract pertaining to rental rates, insurance requirements and other information. No non-state employees may rent vehicles using these agreements.

Q Who can rent and operate vehicles under the State Price Agreements for vehicle rental services?

A Any state employee and authorized users may operate the vehicles. The primary reason is the liability involved for the person driving the vehicle, the contractor and the state. Our Price Agreements include full damage and liability insurance coverage and if a person was involved in an accident operating a rental vehicle, and it was discovered that the person was not a state employee or authorized user of the state, the state could ultimately end up being responsible for a non-state employee or non-authorized user accident.

Q Why should I use the Car rental program?

A If you are in one of Enterprise, Hertz or National cities, you are recommended to use this program. If you are in a city and there is no Enterprise, Hertz or National location(s) there, you may use another provider; just remember to use the Visa travel card, the Visa travel card offers insurance for damage to the rental car referred to Collision Damage Waiver insurance or (CDW): if you do not use the Visa travel card when renting from a non-contract supplier you should purchase this type of insurance.

Q Why do I need a credit card when renting a car?

A The car rental companies, nationwide, require this of ALL customers. This is for their protection when renting a car to an individual. However, Enterprise, Hertz or National will provide agencies that have a documented need with agency direct billing accounts. All charges are accumulated and billed to the agency's account. In this case, a credit card will not be required as Enterprise, Hertz or National has the agency's account information on file.

Q Do I need to buy the extra insurance when renting a car?

A NO. Enterprise, Hertz or National contract covers ALL damage occurred while using the car rental

contract. Also, the State's insurance will cover any rented vehicle operated by state employees while on official business.

Q **What is the insurance coverage for renting cars in Foreign Countries?**

A The insurance coverage for car rentals in foreign countries varies from country to country. Please contact your finance office to verify the type of coverage's that are available for the countries you are traveling to and to determine if you will need to purchase additional insurance from the car rental company.

Q **What is the mileage limit under the car rental program?**

A Unlimited miles although you must pick up and drop off the car at the same location.

Q **What if I need to drop the car off at a different location?**

A No additional fees apply for one-way rentals within 500 miles of the renting location. For one way rentals greater than 500 miles, Enterprise and National will charge a flat rate of \$65 per day. Hertz charges \$125 per rental for all one way rentals exceeding 500 miles. Reservations should be requested in advance to drop-off at a different location.

Q **Do I need to be over 25 to rent a Car?**

A NO, the state contract allows drivers 18 and older to rent a vehicle.

Q **Car Rental Confirmation Numbers.**

A It is recommended that you take the Car Rental Confirmation Number with you when you are going to pick up the rental. This will expedite the rental process.

Q **Please walk around vehicle before departing from rental location.**

A If there are any marks/scratches/damage on the vehicle please immediately inform the rental agent and have them sign off on it.

Q **I need to rent a car, who do I call to make a reservation?**

A You can either call Enterprise, Hertz, and National, use the rental cars online booking tool or contact the authorized Travel Agency Services contractor(s) to make the reservation.

Amtrak

Q **Can I purchase Amtrak tickets directly at the station, or must I use an Authorized Travel Agency?**

A You may purchase Amtrak tickets directly at the station by using your New York State ID to obtain the state government fare. You may also purchase your Amtrak ticket at an Authorized State Travel Agency, however the travel agent will charge a processing fee for this transaction.

Q **Can I purchase personal/vacation Amtrak tickets using the state rate?**

A No. Amtrak state government discount tickets are to be used solely for state business travel.

Q **Does Amtrak provide state discount fares to any of the intermediate stops between Albany and New York (such as Poughkeepsie or Yonkers)?**

A No. Amtrak only provides the state discount rate between Albany or Hudson Stations and New York Penn Station.

Q **Is the state rate available on the "reserved" trains between Albany and New York?**

A Yes, except the Lakeshore Limited.