



# TRAVEL INFORMATION & POLICY

Subject:  Answers to Frequently Asked Questions – Lodging Reservations via Concur	Number:  TIP 15-05 Date Issued:  October 13, 2015
References: <a href="http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/asc/travel/tips/2015/15-004.pdf">http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/asc/travel/tips/2015/15-004.pdf</a> <a href="#">Department of General Services (DGS) Management Memo 14-03</a>	Expires:  Until Rescinded

**Purpose:** To provide employees with answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding lodging reservation via Concur (TIP 15-04). Answers are provided, in part, based on consultation with the California Department of General Services (DGS).

**Background:** The Division of Accounting issued TIP 15-04 on June 19, 2015, requiring department employees to book their lodging reservation via Concur. This TIP is to help clarify some of the common questions and to minimize some of the confusion.

## Q. Why the change in lodging reservations?

A. The change was mandated by DGS (Statewide Travel Program) to help track employee’s lodging selections statewide. The purpose of requiring lodging reservations through Concur is to allow DGS to negotiate better contractual lodging rates with hotels. Reservations using Concur will allow DGS to accumulate data on hotel usage which could not be measured under the previous booking methods.

## Q. How secure is the credit card information?

A. Concur is safe and encrypted. If the employee enters their credit card number into Concur, their profile will only display the last 4 digits of the credit card number. When this information is transferred over to the hotel, it is done digitally. If the hotel desk clerk pulls up the reservation, it will only show the last 4 digits of the credit card. Please click on the link for Concur privacy and security practices:

[Concur's Trust Platform - Service and Information Assurance](#)

## Q. What are some of the alternative methods of making hotel reservations in Concur without using one’s personal credit card?

- The employee can use American Express Government Card.

- If the employee doesn't have the American Express Government Card, they can use a pre-paid credit card, such as a VISA gift card or similar cards that can be purchased at various locations, with a value of \$10. This card would be used only to secure the reservation.
- If the employee has a credit card that has been cancelled, but hasn't expired, they can enter that number into the credit card field. They just need that field to be completed. As long as the card has not expired, the hotels will take it.
- The employee can opt to leave the credit card number out of their profile entirely. It will be needed to reserve the room however, so they will be prompted to enter it into Concur at the time of booking otherwise their room reservation won't go through. They need to remember that if they enter the credit card number in this way, it will automatically save to their profile. They will then need to wait until the information is transferred to the hotel (we recommend at least two hours to be safe) and then go back in and delete the credit card number from their profile. If they delete it too soon, the hotel won't receive the information and they'll lose the booking.

**Q. State employees use Concur to make airline and rental car reservations without having to supply a personal credit card number. Can the same process be used for hotel reservations? If not, why?**

**A.** The airline and rental car reservation goes through approval and payment process that uses Caltrans' AMEX Business Travel Account, whereas, a lodging reservation does not have this feature. Short-Term lodging rates for regular state business differs between different bargaining units and by counties/cities. So if an employee makes a reservation for a room which is higher than the allowable state rate, it will be difficult to monitor or regulate. It will not be feasible to chargeback employees any amount that is over the allowable state rate. Employees will need to use their personal credit card for hotel reservations.

**Q. Can the state mandate that employee give an outside party his/her credit card information when the employee does not trust the security of on-line records?**

**A.** Hotels already require the employees provide their personal credit card information when making a reservation either on the phone or on their website. Concur has built in additional security features. If the employee still doesn't want to enter their credit card information in their profile, there are the other options available which were mentioned earlier.

**Q. Do lodging reservations go through an approval process and what options are available to those who are not able to fulfill the approval process requirements?**

**A.** Yes, lodging reservations made in Concur do require supervisor's approval. All lodging reservations need to be approved by the supervisor within **six hours** in order for a room confirmation. If the lodging reservations made in Concur are not approved by the supervisor within six hours, they are cancelled.

In cases where it is impractical for supervisors to approve lodging reservations within six hours, employees are allowed to make their reservations by calling the hotel directly, via hotel's website, or through a third party website.

**Q. If an employee already has a reservation made for future travel, is there further action required?**

**A.** No further action is required for reservations that have already been made for future travel. The reservation can be left as it is.

**Q. Is there any exception process (forms) for employees who do not have any email account or computer?**

**A.** There is no form or exception process currently required for employees to complete. Department employees without a department email address or access to work computer may continue to book their lodging reservations as they have done in the past.

As an option, an employee who does not have an email account or computer available, may use the "Booking for guest" function in Concur. They may also request an employee at the District office or program to assist with booking travel arrangements for others.

**Q. What options are available to employees if a preferred hotel does not appear in Concur? What options are available if a preferred hotel that has offered lodging at the state rate does not show the state rate in Concur?**

**A.** Employees should contact the Travel Policy Section [john.garibay@dot.ca.gov](mailto:john.garibay@dot.ca.gov) if they run into a situation where a hotel is not listed in Concur or a hotel in Concur does not provide a State lodging rate when previously it has. DGS has asked Caltrans to share this type of information and will reach out to the hotels with instructions on how to make themselves available through Concur. While DGS is working on this process, they request that the traveler choose in Concur another comparable hotel in the area. Concur draws its information from a Global Distribution System (GDS) called Sabre. Hotels will pay fees to GDS to

make their hotels available online. If the hotel is already online, it is easy for them to be listed in the GDS.

We know there are some areas, such as Burney or Quincy and other remote areas, that don't have hotels available in Concur. Some of the hotels don't have an online presence already, and others have found that the fees they would pay to the GDS wouldn't increase their bookings enough for it to be cost effective. These situations are exceptions to the requirement for reserving lodging through Concur.

**Q. Employees were able to negotiate with hotels to drop their room rate to the allowable state limit by contacting the hotel directly. How will this be possible when making reservation via Concur?**

**A.** Same answer as above. Please share the information with us so DGS can contact the hotels directly and work with them to make the information available through Concur.

**Q. What options are available if an employee cannot find a hotel in Concur that is within the state rate for the location and date of travel?**

**A.** Employees should use every effort to secure a hotel at state rate. There are nearly 90,000 hotels available just in California, so odds are they will be able to find one. If not, the employee can complete and submit form STD. 255C "Excess Lodging Rate Request/Approval" to the Travel Policy Section for consideration prior to travel. The request should be submitted at least 15 calendar days in advance of travel or as soon as the circumstances that require approval are known.

**Q. Are the employees required to book accommodations that are a long distance from where they will do business if Concur did not provide lodging options at state rates at the desired location?**

**A.** If there is nothing available through Concur in reasonable proximity to where employees will do business, then the employee may book through the hotel directly. As mentioned, there are areas that don't have hotels in Concur. They are typically remote areas, and rather than have the employee travel a long distance each way to do business, the employees can reserve directly with the hotel.

**Q. What if an employee would like to opt for a lodging rate in excess of the state rate and pay the difference out of pocket?**

**A.** Concur does not change anything regarding reimbursement. If employees choose to reserve a hotel at a higher rate, they can pay the difference.

**Q. If an employee needs a full kitchen at the accommodation for dietary needs or other special amenities, how can this be handled? The profile seems to allow for choosing options at hotels such as a gym or room service but nothing for a full kitchen.**

**A.** If the employee knows which hotels offer the amenity, they can reserve accordingly. If an employee wants to check if a hotel has a particular amenity when they make their search in Concur, they may click on the “more info” link on the search results page for a hotel. Concur will list all of the information that is available on the hotel’s website. Despite what is specified in the Concur profiles, Concur doesn’t limit the results to only hotels that match those preferences. However, Concur allows for sorting search results to what matches the preferences.

**Q. What if an employee opts for less conventional travel accommodations such as camp grounds or AIRBNB or other rental options as allowed by current MOUs?**

**A.** Those are still viable options and are exceptions to booking lodging reservations through Concur.

**Q. Can reservations be made in Concur to block rooms for conference?**

**A.** No, those are an exception to reserving lodging through Concur. Room blocks are contracted rates that are assigned to a specific function or event. Concur does not have access to the coding for those rates. Those can continue to be reserved directly with the hotel. If the room block rate is higher than the state rate for the location, travelers are asked to do a cost comparison with what is included in that rate. For example, if it’s \$150 in a \$95 area, does it include parking and/or meals? CalHR is taking a close look at these room blocks in excess of lodging rates and the exception will not be approved if the justification isn’t adequate.

**Q. Can out-of-state hotel reservation be made via Concur?**

**A.** Yes.

**Q. Can out-of-country hotel reservation be made via Concur?**

**A.** Yes. Concur has access to hotels globally.

**Q. What are the consequences, in cases where it is impossible for employees to make hotel reservation via Concur and the reservation**

**is made by calling the hotel directly?**

**A.** There are very few situations where it would be “impossible” to book through Concur. In those cases where it is impossible, there are no repercussions to not booking through Concur.

**Q. How can employees get access to Concur?**

**A.** Please call either John Garibay @ 916-227-4281, or Terence Hung @ 916-227-9330, and they can provide you access to Concur.

If you have questions about this TIP, please contact Rajesh Rai at (916) 227-9079. To view the Department’s travel policies, please visit the [Caltrans Travel Guide](#).

For individuals with sensory disabilities, documents may be obtained in alternate formats. To obtain such services, please e-mail [Rajesh\\_Rai@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Rajesh_Rai@dot.ca.gov). TTY users may also call (800) 735-2922.