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Uniform, Equipment and Expense Reimbursement for Security Guards

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Under Labor Code 2802, California security employers generally must reimburse guards for necessary work-related expenses, which can include required uniforms, flashlights, duty belts, personal phone use for work, and sometimes guard card or training costs.

Why guards face this issue often

Security work frequently requires the guard to buy or maintain specific gear — uniforms, flashlights, radios, boots — and to use a personal phone for check calls or reporting.

California law places the cost of doing business on the employer, not the employee, for necessary expenditures required to perform the job.

Common expense categories

Expense	Typically reimbursable?	Notes
Required uniform purchase/maintenance	Yes	If employer mandates a specific uniform
Flashlight, duty belt, other required gear	Yes	If required to perform the job
Personal cell phone use for work calls	Yes	Reasonable percentage of plan cost
Guard card (BSIS) application fee	Case-by-case	Often treated as a cost of employment if required by the specific job
Company-mandated training beyond state minimum	Often yes	If required by the employer as a condition of the job

What guards should track

- Receipts for required uniform items, boots, and equipment purchases
- Any employer policy stating what the guard must supply personally
- Evidence of personal phone use for work, such as call logs or text messages with dispatch

- Guard card, live scan, and required training receipts

Practical note

Reimbursement obligations can depend on the specific facts of the job and the employer's policies, so guards should keep documentation even before raising a claim.

Research and education only

This page is for research and education about expense reimbursement concepts under California law and is not legal advice. Summit Force Security Group is not a law firm and does not provide legal representation.

Guards with a specific reimbursement dispute should contact the California Labor Commissioner's Office or a licensed California employment attorney.

Quick answers

Does an employer have to pay for a required uniform?

Generally yes, if the employer requires a specific uniform, the cost is typically treated as a reimbursable business expense under Labor Code 2802.

Is a guard's personal phone bill reimbursable?

A reasonable portion of personal phone costs used for required work communication is often reimbursable, even on unlimited plans.

Does the employer have to pay for the guard card application?

This can depend on the circumstances; guards should check with the Labor Commissioner if their employer requires the card for the specific job.

What if an employer refuses to reimburse required gear?

The guard can raise it directly with the employer and, if unresolved, file a wage claim with the Labor Commissioner.

Do I need a receipt to get reimbursed?

Receipts help but reimbursement obligations are not solely dependent on having a receipt; keep whatever documentation is available.

Primary sources — read the official text

Labor Code Section 2802	California Legislative Information	https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=2802.&lawCode=LAB
Business and Professions Code Section 7583 et seq. (PSA)	California Legislative Information	https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?division=3.&chapter=11.4.&lawCode=BPC

Guard Card and Training Requirements	California BSIS	https://www.bsis.ca.gov/forms_pubs/guard_card.shtml
Wage Order 4-2001	California DIR	https://www.dir.ca.gov/iwc/wageorderindustries.htm

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