

# NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

## FIRE DISTRICT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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**Number:** 0500.0007.00

**Date:** 8/21/2014

**Area:** Financial Management

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**Subject:** Travel - Expense Policy

**Approved:**

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### **1.0 General**

The Board of Commissioners of North Whatcom Fire and Rescue recognize that board members, officers, and employees (members) of NWFR may be required to travel or incur other expenses from time to time to conduct fire district business. This policy will be a guideline to aid in the administration of the purchase of any goods and/or services made on behalf of NWFR.

### **2.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that (a) adequate cost controls are in place, (b) travel and other expenditures are appropriate, and (c) to provide a uniform and consistent approach for the timely reimbursement of authorized expenses incurred by Personnel. It is the policy of NWFR to reimburse only reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred by Personnel.

2.1 When incurring business expenses, NWFR expects Members to:

- Exercise discretion and good business judgment with respect to those expenses.
- Be cost conscious and spend fire district money as carefully and judiciously as the member would spend his or her own funds.
- Report expenses, supported by required documentation, as they were actually spent.

### **3.0 Scope**

These guidelines apply to all members who are directly or indirectly involved in the purchase or approval of purchase of goods or services on behalf of the district.

### **4.0 Procedures**

Receipts are required for all expenditures that are billed directly or indirectly to NWFR. Receipts must be retained and attached to Travel Expense Form when submitted to the Finance Department.

**4.1 Personal and Spousal Travel Expenses:** With advance approval from a chief officer, members traveling on behalf of NWFR may incorporate personal travel or business with their fire district-related trips; however, Members shall not arrange fire district travel at a time that is less advantageous to NWFR or involving greater expenses to NWFR in order to accommodate personal travel plans. Any additional expenses

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incurred as a result of personal travel, including but not limited to extra hotel nights, additional stopovers, meals or transportation, are the sole responsibility of the member and will not be reimbursed by NWFR. Expenses associated with travel of a member's spouse, family or friends will not be reimbursed by NWFR.

### **4.2 Per Diem Meal Reimbursements**

Members traveling on behalf of NWFR are reimbursed on the annually published rates by the Office of Financial Management when they actually incur the cost of a meal. They will not be reimbursed for meals paid for or provided by others or as part of the registration fees.

4.2.1 Exceptions to the above limits may be made where available meal options require higher expenditures. Exceptions will require a receipt, and must be approved by a chief officer of NWFR.

- The following applicable forms are required when any purchase of goods and/or services for any type of travel made on behalf of NWFR

### **4.3 Travel Expense Form** (*see attached*)

The following information must be included on the Travel Expense form:

#### **4.3.1 PART 1**

- Line 1 - Individual's name, Employee #, Last 4 digits of a credit card (if used)
- Line 2 - Address, Method of Travel
- Line 3 - Event Title, Event location
- Line 4 - Event date(s)

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### **4.3.2**      **PART 2**

- Date of Purchase
- Vendor
- Daily itemized expenses (i.e. Trans, Lodging, Meals, Item Purchased)
- Actual cost of purchase and/or service
- If paid by credit card – Y
- Mileage when using personal vehicle - (a photo copy of a map showing actual route to a from destination is required)

**4.3.3** Please make sure the Travel expense form is approved and signed by a Chief Officer before it is forwarded to the Finance Department.

4.3.1 An advance travel check will be generated for members who complete an Advance Travel Expense Form. The completed form must be submitted to the Finance Department at least 1 week prior to the scheduled departure date.

4.3.2 A reimbursement check will be processed for the member when all paperwork is completed correctly with all receipts attached. The Reimbursement Request Form shall be submitted to the Finance Department within two weeks of the completion of travel.

### **4.4 Credit Cards**

When a credit card is issued to members for travel and other related expenses, the requirements for credit card expenses, explaining charges, as described above under the applicable Travel Expense Form instruction must be met.

4.4.1 Credit cards will only be used for business purposes.

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**4.5 Travel Expenses Special Note:** *Members who have been approved and scheduled to attend outside training or classes and conferences out of the area who are unable to attend for any reason should notify the Chief as soon as possible in order to give the department ample notification time to cancel any and all reservations possible. Any member traveling on or behalf of NWFR who makes changes to or deviates from the previously arranged air-travel, hotel, or class reservations will be responsible for any unnecessary or additional expenses incurred by the District.*

### **4.6 Air Travel**

*General:* Air travel reservations should be made as far in advance as possible in order to take advantage of reduced fares.

### **4.7 Lodging**

Members traveling on behalf of NWFR will be reimbursed for a reasonable cost of hotel accommodations. Members shall always use the available government and discount rates for hotels.

### **4.8 Ground Transportation**

Members are expected to use the most economical ground transportation appropriate under the circumstances and should generally use the following, in this order of desirability:

*4.8.1 Courtesy Cars:* Many hotels have courtesy cars, which will take you to and from the airport at no charge. Members should take advantage of this free service whenever possible. Another alternative may be a shuttle or bus.

*4.8.2 Taxis:* When courtesy cars and airport shuttles are not available, a taxi is often the next most economical and convenient form of transportation when the trip is for a limited time and minimal mileage is involved.

*4.8.3 Rental Cars:* Car rentals are expensive so other forms of transportation should be considered when possible. Members will be allowed to rent a car while out of town provided that the cost is less than alternative methods of transportation.

*4.8.3.1* Mid-sized vehicles are the recommended size for rental purposes. Upgrades to full-size vehicle are permissible when necessary to transport personnel and equipment if approved by a

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chief officer. In addition to the payment for the cost of the rental car, the only other permissible expense for rental cars in most cases is the cost to purchase gasoline. All drivers of rental cars must be over the age of twenty-one (21) and have a valid Washington driver's license.

4.8.3.2 Fire District members do **not** need to purchase rental car insurance as this coverage is already provided under the Fire District's Auto Insurance provider "Enduris". Please contact the Finance Department prior to travel to obtain a copy of proof of insurance documentation.

4.8.3.3 Personal effect coverage/effects protection optional insurance coverages will not be reimbursed.

4.8.3.4 When rental cars are provided with a full tank of gasoline, they should be returned to the car rental provider with a full tank of fuel when possible in order to avoid expensive re-fuelling costs.

4.8.3.5 It is the members' responsibility to check and acknowledge the condition of the car at the time of collection and return with the car rental company.

4.8.3.6 The member is personally responsible for any fines or license endorsements throughout the rental of the vehicle.

### **4.9 Parking/Tolls**

Parking and toll expenses, including charges for hotel parking, incurred by Members traveling on organization business will be reimbursed. The costs of parking tickets, fines, car washes, valet service, etc., are the responsibility of the employee and will not be reimbursed.

On-airport parking is permitted for short business trips. For extended trips, Members should use off-airport facilities.

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### **4.10 Other Expenses**

Reasonable expenses incurred for business meetings or other types of business-related entertainment will be reimbursed only if the expenditures are approved in advance by a chief officer of NWFR.

## **5.0 Control Mechanisms**

### **5.1 Non-reimbursable Expenditures**

NWFR maintains a strict policy that expenses in any category that could be perceived as lavish or excessive will not be reimbursed; as such expenses are inappropriate for reimbursement by the fire district. Expenses that are not reimbursable include, but are not limited to:

5.1.1 Travel insurance

5.1.2 First class tickets or upgrades

5.1.3 When lodging accommodations have been arranged by NWFR and the member elects to stay elsewhere, reimbursement is made at the amount no higher than the rate negotiated by NWFR. Reimbursement shall not be made for transportation between the alternate lodging and the meeting site.

5.1.1 Movies, liquor/tobacco products, or controlled substances

5.1.5 Membership dues at any country club, private club, athletic club, golf club, tennis club or similar recreational organization

5.1.6 Personal entertainment and transportation

5.1.7 Business conferences and entertainment which are not approved by a chief officer or NWFR Board of Commissioners

5.1.8 Personal items or loans

5.1.9 Any other items deemed inconsistent with the values of the fire district

5.1.10 Expenses for spouses, friends, or relatives. If a spouse, friend or relative accompanies Personnel on a trip, it is the responsibility of the personnel to determine any

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added cost for double occupancy and related expenses and to make the appropriate adjustment in the reimbursement request.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman, Board of Fire Commissioners  
North Whatcom Fire & Rescue

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*SEMPER PARATUS*

## Travel / Expense Form

 Advance  
Travel

 Reimburse

Name: _____	Employee #: _____	Card Number (Last 4 Digits): _____
Mailing Address: _____	Part 1	Method of Travel: _____
Event Title: _____		
Event Dates: (Include Beginning and Ending) _____		

Part 2 Date	Vendor	Air & Trans	Lodging	Per Diem Breakfast	Per Diem Lunch	Dinner	Item Purchased	Cost of Items Purchased	BARS Number	Paid by Credit Card	Total
mm/dd/yy											
<b>TOTAL</b>											
Mileage:		x .535									
Other Charges:		Description:									
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>											

*I certify under penalty of perjury that the amount claimed herein is a true and correct claim for necessary expenses that will be or have been, incurred by me, and that no payment has been received by me on account thereof.*

Requestor Signature: _____	Division: _____
Supervisor Signature: _____	