

SPOKANE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT
Board of Fire Commissioners
Policy for Travel and Reimbursement #017

Purpose:

The Spokane Valley Fire Department will reimburse Department personnel for reasonable approved mileage and travel expenses. The Department will follow the recommendations and guidelines of the State Auditor's Office for personal reimbursements.

Authority:

Resolution 35-87

Resolution 2006-266

Board Action 12/5/94

Board Action 1/17/94

Board Action 1/03/01

U.S. General Services Administration – (Domestic Per Diem Rates)

Policy:

I. Definitions

- A. The term "Department personnel" includes the members of the Board of Commissioners, the appointed Secretary, the officers and the fire fighters and support staff of the Department.
- B. The term "*authorized purpose or travel*" means such purpose or travel that has been approved in advance by the Board of Commissioners of the Department, the Fire Chief or authorized designee.
- C. The term "*expense reimbursement*" means the amounts paid to personnel for reimbursement of expenses incurred and shall be in addition to any other sums to which the individual might be entitled for services performed.
- D. The term "reasonable person standard" is a test used to define the legal duty to protect one's own interest and that of others. The standard requires one to act with the same degree of care, knowledge, fair-mindedness, and awareness of the law that the community would expect of a hypothetical reasonable person. The purpose behind the reasonable person standard is the public good.
- E. The term "*incidental expenses*", are fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships, per the Federal Travel Regulation Chapter 300, Part 300-3.
- F. The term Tri-State area refers to Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

II. General Travel Rules

- A. SVFD agrees to pay for or reimburse employees for the reasonable cost of certain allowable meeting and travel expenses, which may be incurred as a part of the performance of that employee's job.
- B. SVFD will not reimburse for any travel expenses that are associated with personal side trips.
- C. The employee's Chief Officer is required to:
 - a. Ensure that any travel costs incurred are:
 - i. Directly work related
 - ii. Obtained at the most economical price
 - iii. Both critical and necessary for Department business
 - b. Ensure prudent judgment in approving travel-related costs
- D. The Chief Officer must use the following criteria to determine whether to authorize a person to travel on official Department business and to determine what travel alternatives to authorize. The personal plans of the traveler shall not influence this criterion. The "reasonable person standard" should be followed.
 - a. Select the travel alternative that is most economical to the Department.
 - b. Select the travel alternative that is most advantageous to the Department.
- E. All travel outside the Tri-State area of Washington, Oregon and Idaho shall require prior approval of the Board of Commissioners.
 - a. Travel requests shall include the rationale of how attendance will be of benefit to SVFD.
 - b. The employee shall provide a brief written or oral report to the Board of Commissioners upon return summarizing the content of the conference.
 - c. Travel for the purpose of mobilization shall be exempt.
 - d. In cases of unanticipated travel needs, prior approval from the Board of Commissioners may be waived at the Fire Chief's discretion. Reporting requirements will remain in effect.
- F. The traveler on official Department business is responsible for:
 - a. Being familiar with Department travel and transportation regulations before embarking on travel.
 - b. Paying any excess costs and additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.
 - c. Returning as promptly as possible to either the official work station or official residence when the Department business is completed.
 - d. Securing prior authorization for travel.
 - e. Travel shall be by the method of transportation and route most advantageous to SVFD. This means the traveler must make the travel arrangement that is the lowest cost alternative. If, for personal reasons, the traveler wishes to make travel arrangements that are not the lowest

cost alternative, the traveler will only be reimbursed for the lowest cost alternative. Any excess costs become the personal responsibility of the traveler. For example, if a person chose to drive their personal vehicle to Seattle, the lesser of the mileage expense or the airfare + transportation cost would be reimbursed.

- G. Miscellaneous travel expenses not directly related to conduct official Department business are not reimbursable. Examples are:
- a. Airline upgrades
 - b. Alcoholic beverages
 - c. Early boarding
 - d. Insurance for rental vehicles
 - e. Rental vehicle upgrades
 - f. Flight insurance
 - g. Limousine services
 - h. Transportation to places or entertainment or similar personal activities
 - i. Travel, lodging, and meal expenses for non-employees (i.e. family, vendors, and consultants).

II. Travel Arrangements

- A. All reservations for transportation and lodging will be arranged by the Executive Administrative Assistant or Division's Administrative Assistant, unless approved by the Chief Officer responsible.
- B. Travel requests shall be approved by a Chief Officer prior to travel and submitted to the Executive Administrative Assistant or Division's Administrative Assistant two weeks in advance of the anticipated travel. In cases of unanticipated travel needs, this two week notice may be waived at the Chief Officers discretion.
- C. Out of the ordinary travel by members of the Board of Commissioners must be approved in advance by the Board of Commissioners.

III. Per Diem and Travel Reimbursement

Personnel traveling for an authorized Department purpose will be compensated for meals and incidental expenses at the established IRS per diem rates. Employees receiving a per diem may not charge meals to the Department credit card. Meal receipts are not required when receiving a per diem.

Travel Days: The per diem on the first and last day of travel is calculated at 75 percent of the prescribed meals and incidental expenses (M&IE). Meals provided on travel days are not reduced from the 75% per diem.

Partial per diem: will apply when meals are provided during travel, i.e. when meals are provided during a conference. Meal payments are not required to be reduced due to meals served on airlines or continental breakfasts.

Meals shall be reimbursed at the current IRS per-diem rate.

Advance for per diem: Requests for per diem in advance of travel should be submitted two weeks prior to travel to the Finance Administrative Assistant for timely voucher processing.

Motel or Hotel Accommodations:

Lodging will be reimbursed at the actual reasonable cost.

V. Transportation

- A. Mileage reimbursement: Department personnel using a private automobile for authorized Department travel shall be reimbursed at the rate of the allowable Washington State government maximum at the current IRS rate.
- B. Public carriers: Department personnel on authorized travel on behalf of the Department using public carriers shall be reimbursed for the actual reasonable cost of the transportation. In the event different fares are charged for different classes of accommodation, the reimbursement shall not exceed the lowest fare available for such transportation.
- C. Car Rental: Car rentals require approval by the Fire Chief or his designee.

VI. Registration Fees

Department personnel shall be reimbursed for the actual amount of any required registration fee paid by the individual for attending a conference, class or school providing the attendance has been authorized by the Board of Commissioners, Fire Chief or authorized designee.

VII. Payment of Authorized Expenditures

- A. Travel Reimbursement: All requests for reimbursement of expenses shall be presented to the Finance Department within thirty days (30) of return from authorized travel. All receipts for expenditures charge to SVFD shall be presented to the Finance Division within ten days (10) of return from authorized travel. Claim of any charge which could reasonably raise a question should be accompanied by an explanation of such charge.

VII. Proof of Expenses

All requests for reimbursement shall be submitted together with proof of the travel, attendance or expense. This requirement may be satisfied by submission of any of the following documents:

- A. Reimbursement of actual expenses. Original detailed receipts for all expenses incurred.
- B. Per Diem. Proof of attendance for event or function including registration receipt or if registration is required or receipt for lodging if registration is not required.
- C. Transportation reimbursement. Proof of attendance for function or event or if private transportation is used together with record of mileage driven or carrier receipt if public transportation is used.
- D. Affidavit for Lost Receipt-Expenditure Certification In the event that it shall be impossible for the individual to obtain the required receipts or in the event of the loss or destruction of such receipts, the individual shall submit an affidavit attesting to the amount of the expenses. (See Forms in Power DMS) **Incomplete forms will be returned unpaid.** The determination of the sufficiency of an affidavit shall be at the discretion of the Finance Director.

Adopted:
Spokane Valley Board of Fire Commissioners:
November 12, 1987

Amended:
Spokane Valley Board of Fire Commissioners:
February 8, 2021