

**SPOKANE VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**Board of Fire Commissioners**  
**Policy for Use of Department Resources #003**

**Purpose:**

The term "Department resources", as used in this Policy, includes Department station facilities, equipment, communications systems, computer hardware and software, telecommunications hardware, software and data, internet access services, telephone and electronic mail systems and all Department tangible and intangible property.

1. Department officers and Department employees are obligated to conserve and protect Department resources for the benefit of the public interest, rather than their private interests. Use of Department resources shall be limited to the uses that support organizational effectiveness, are reasonable and of negligible cost, and uses that do not violate ethics laws or this Policy. Responsibility and accountability for the appropriate use of Department resources ultimately rests with the individual Department officer and Department employee, or with the Department officer or Department employee who authorizes such use.
2. Department officers or Department employees may not use Department resources including any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction or in his or her custody for private benefit or gain of the officer or employee or any other person. This prohibition does not apply to the use of public resources to benefit another person as part of the officer's or employee's official duties.
3. The following are prohibited uses of Department resources:
  - a. Any use for the purpose of conducting an outside business;
  - b. A use for the purpose of supporting, promoting, or soliciting for an outside organization or group unless provided for by the law or authorized by the Department chief officer or designee;
  - c. Any campaign or political use;
  - d. Commercial uses such as advertising or selling;
  - e. An illegal activity.
  - f. A Department officer or employee may not use Department resources for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Such a use of Department resources is not authorized by this Policy and is specifically prohibited by RCW 42.17A.555, subject to the exceptions in RCW 42.17A.555.

- g. A Department officer or employee may not make private use of any Department property that has been removed from Department facilities or other official duty stations, even if there is no cost to the Department.
  - h. A Department officer or employee may not make private use of any Department property that is consumable such as paper, envelopes or spare parts, even if the actual cost to the Department is de minimis.
  - i. A Department officer or employee may not use Department computers or other equipment to access computer networks containing offensive or pornographic materials or other data bases nor shall they use Department computers to distribute offensive or pornographic materials.
4. Subject to the prohibitions in subsection (2) and (3) of this Policy, a Department officer or employee may make occasional but limited use of Department resources only if:
- a. There is no cost to the Department;
  - b. The use of Department resources does not interfere with the performance of the officer's or employees official duties;
  - c. The use is brief in duration and does not disrupt or distract from the conduct of Department business due to volume or frequency;
  - d. The use does not compromise the security or integrity of Department information or software;
  - e. The Department may authorize a use that promotes organizational effectiveness or enhances the job-related skills of a Department officer or Department employee.
  - f. A Department officer or employee may use computers and electronic mail provided such use conforms to ethical standards and does not violate the prohibitions contained in sections (2) and (3) of this Policy.
5. In general, a Department officer or employee may not make private use of Department resources and then reimburse the Department so there is no actual cost to the Department. However, the board recognizes that in some limited situations, such as officers or employees working at remote locations, a system of reimbursement may be appropriate. Any system of reimbursement must be established by the Department in advance and must result in no cost to the Department. To be valid under this Policy the Board must approve a reimbursement system.

6. The Department is often requested to participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events either through donations, use of resources or other participation. As a municipal corporation, the Department is restricted by the Washington State Constitution's prohibition on the gifting of public funds. See Article 8, Section 7. However, The Board of Commissioners has determined that participation in certain events and support of community organizations is important to the organizational effectiveness of the Department. The community relations benefits received by the Department provide a corresponding benefit to the Department. The Department's participation in such events shall be governed by the following basic principles:

7. Community Events and Fundraiser Participation:

**7.1 Organizational Effectiveness.** The Department shall only participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events if the participation promotes Organizational Effectiveness. Organizational Effectiveness relates to the Department's mission of providing fire protection, fire prevention, fire suppression and emergency medical services. Activities that enhance or augment the Department's ability to perform its mission by educating the public, promoting a positive perception of the Department or enhancing the job-related skills of Department personnel will be deemed to be organizationally effective.

**7.2 De Minimis Use of Resources.** The Department shall only participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events when the use of Department resources is de minimis. Because of the prohibition on gifting, use of Department resources in support of events that promote organizational effectiveness must not exceed a de minimis use. In order for a use of Department resources to be considered de minimis, the use must be of minimal cost, not interfere with the performance of the Department mission, be brief in frequency and duration, not disrupt the activities of other employees and not compromise the security or integrity of Department information. The following non-exclusive list of resource uses are declared to be de minimis uses.

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