



WADING RIVER FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

3.11 Travel Policy

OBJECTIVE:

This policy covers the review, reimbursement and/or settlement of all travel related expenses.

APPLCABILITY:

The Fire District's travel policy applies to all members (including chiefs and commissioners) who travel in the name of the Fire District where any portion of that travel is paid for by the Fire District. While the GSA daily meal and incidental expense (M&IE) allotment provision under the law only applies to members of the rank of captain or lower, the Fire District has voluntarily adopted the GSA M&IE daily allotment for all individuals (including chiefs and commissioners) traveling under the Fire District.

POLICY:

The following guidelines are provided to all members of the Fire Department who plan to travel under the Wading River Fire District.

All travel for Fire District business must be authorized by the Board of Fire Commissioners and such approval must be noted in the official meeting minutes of the Board. Personnel electing to travel to and attend events at their own expense without Board authorization will not be considered to be on official district business and will not be deemed to be representatives of the Fire District or fire department at such events. It is important to note that personnel are not covered under Workers Compensation or Volunteer Firefighters Benefits Law plans unless they are engaged in officially authorized travel and are injured or rendered ill in the performance of official duties.

All travel arrangements must be made by the Fire District Manager or other approved representative of the Board of Fire Commissioners unless otherwise authorized by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Lodging accommodations on official business are exempt from State and local taxes if travel is within New York State. A form should be obtained from the Fire District Manager prior to travel so that it can be used by the traveling official, employee, chief or firefighter at the travel location.

Alcoholic beverages are not an authorized expense and will not be reimbursed.

Travel must be by the most direct route possible. Travel must be undertaken by the most cost effective and reasonable means. The most cost effective and reasonable means of travel will be determined by the Board of Fire Commissioners and the district official assigned to make reservations and travel arrangements. It will not be at the discretion of traveling personnel. Any person traveling on district business at district expense seeking to change travel arrangements must contact the district office and obtain official approval before making any changes to arrangements made by the district office. In the event that the person fails to do so, he or she will be personally responsible for any additional cost created by unauthorized changes to travel arrangements. The decision to use air or rail transportation rather than a district owned vehicle, personal vehicle or rental vehicle shall be a Board decision based upon the most cost effective and reasonable means of travel. Personnel with special needs must advise the district office of those needs. However, it is important to note that special needs relate to the traveling official, employee, chief or firefighter. They do not relate to family members who might be traveling with the official, employee, chief or firefighter. Please note that it is not that the Board of Fire Commissioners is insensitive to such needs, but rather that district funds can only be expended on the legally reimbursable expenses incurred by the official, employee, chief or firefighter.

All traveling Fire District personnel shall be required to submit a Travel Expense Report (TER). The report must fully describe and detail the expenses incurred. The report must be accompanied by all necessary receipts. For example, lodging, transportation, meals, tolls, etc. District personnel participating in outside seminars, conventions, conferences and training must submit a TER and district claim voucher form within two (2) weeks of their return. Failure to meet this deadline may result in denial of the claim for reimbursement at the discretion of the Board of Fire Commissioners.

All expenses must be clearly and correctly described and must represent money actually expended on behalf of the Fire District. TERs may not contain any personal expenditure. Only the member actually traveling will be permitted to submit a travel report and claim. Only the member incurring the expense may be reimbursed. Travel expense reports will not be used to obtain reimbursement for funds expended for material purchases and repair to equipment. All expenses will be reviewed and reconciled by the Board of Fire Commissioners and an appropriate explanation if any shall be attached to the Travel Expense Report (TER).

Any expenditure incurred that is not in compliance with this policy will be considered the personal financial responsibility of the member involved.

Travel will begin on the day of the convention or seminar and end on the last day of the convention or seminar unless the Board determines to permit travel the day before and the day after the convention or seminar based upon the location of the meeting, and the time of the first /last meeting that is scheduled for the event. If travel to and from the location of the meeting will take in excess of two hours (portal to portal, land and air transportation combined), and the meeting /registration begins before 11:00 a.m., the Board will consider authorizing travel the day before. Under similar circumstances the Board will consider travel the day after the convention or seminar if the last meeting ends at 3:00 p.m. or later. In addition, the Board will consider, on a case by case basis, an application to leave for a convention/seminar early or return later if the convention/seminar requires air travel, does not require a Saturday stay over, and the inclusion of a Saturday stay over will result in a net savings to the District when airfare cost is compared to the cost of lodging/meal/rental car, etc. for the additional day(s).

Cost Effective and Reasonable Means

The law requires that all travel be carried out using the most cost effective and reasonable means. This should not be misconstrued to be the most convenient means.

However, Section 77-b of General Municipal Law and Section 178-c of the Town Law were amended in 2006 in order to provide that travel expenses incurred by Fire District officers, employees and chiefs must be incurred based upon the most cost effective and reasonable means of travel, and that any mileage allowances may not to exceed the Internal Revenue Service limits. The Board of Fire Commissioners has determined that all travel expenses incurred by the Wading River Fire District shall be incurred based upon the use of the most cost effective and reasonable means of travel.

In addition, the Fire District Manager, under the Board's direction, will review hotel and lodging accommodation in order to make certain the personnel obtain the Government Services Administration rate for lodging in that location where available. The Board minutes will reflect Board review and approval of the lodging rates approved for each event.

Air Transportation

Air transportation may only be used when it is the most cost effective and reasonable. This should not be misconstrued to mean the most convenient. When presenting a case for air travel as opposed to ground transportation, be sure to present evidence as to why air transportation is more cost effective and reasonable and be careful that you don't present a case as to why you "want to fly" or why you "need to fly." It has to be why air travel is the most cost effective and reasonable. Airline reservations will be made in coach or economy class - not in first class.

1. Excluding taxi, airport shuttle, and local bus, train, and subway transportation, the Fire District Manager shall make all transportation reservations. When extenuating circumstances exist, the Board may authorize others to make transportation reservations. No district employee, chief, officer, or firefighter shall make transportation reservations without the prior consent of the Board and such authorization must be noted in the official meeting minutes of the Board.
2. Arrangements for payment for transportation shall be made in advance by the Fire District Manager and any failure to do so shall be reported to the Board.
3. Travel shall be either coach, economy or business class unless the trip is of an emergency nature and coach, economy class or business class is not available, or unless the effect of first class travel is an overall economy to the travel purpose.
4. The passenger's portion of the used tickets and any unused tickets must be attached to the Travel Expense Report.
5. If a member's spouse or other members of their family accompany a member on a business trip, expenses other than those directly applicable to the member, are considered personal and are therefore non reimbursable.
6. Reimbursable charges for intercity travel are authorized. The use of public mass transit is encouraged. However if it is necessary to use Taxicabs, Buses, Etc., efforts should be made to secure receipts and attach them to the Travel Expense Report.

Hotel/Motel Reservations

Members on Fire District travel will be booked in a single room when traveling alone and in double occupancy rooms (two people to a room) when traveling in groups of two or more where applicable. To avoid the appearance of violating the “cost effective and reasonable clause,” members on District travel will not be booked in suites or other luxury hotel accommodations.

1. The Fire District Manager shall make all lodging reservations. When extenuating circumstances exist, the Board may authorize others to make lodging reservations. No district employee, chief, officer, or firefighter shall make lodging reservations without the prior consent of the Board and such authorization must be noted in the official meeting minutes of the Board.
2. Arrangements for payment for lodging shall be made in advance by the Fire District Manager and any failure to do so shall be reported to the Board.
3. When prior lodging payment isn't made, hotel and motel expense shall be reimbursable when incurred in the course of official business
4. If the duration of the stay necessary is sufficient to warrant a weekly rate efforts should be made to secure the weekly rate.
5. Original hotel bills and receipts for hotel and motel room charges must be submitted. These charges are to be attached to the members Travel Expense Report.
6. Lodging accommodations on official business are exempt from State and Local taxes if the travel is within New York State.
7. In addition, the Board will review hotel and lodging accommodations in order to make certain that personnel obtain the Government Services Administration rate for lodging in that location where available and when not available, the convention, conference or seminar published room rate provided same is not greater than three times the Government Services Administration rate for lodging in that location (see 300% rule applied by GSA under Federal Travel Regulation). The Board minutes will reflect Board review and approval of the lodging rates approved for each event.

Car Rental

1. The Fire District Manager shall make all car rental reservations. When extenuating circumstances exist, the Board may authorize others to make car rental reservations. No district employee, chief, officer, or of the Board and such authorization must be noted in the official meeting minutes of the Board.
2. Arrangements for payment for car rentals shall be made in advance by the Fire District Manager and any failure to do so shall be reported to the Board.
3. Full sized cars should be selected for rental. Drop off charges for one way rentals should be avoided if possible.
4. If the car rental is of sufficient duration to warrant a weekly rate, then all efforts should be made to secure such a rate.
5. A copy of the car rental charges must be attached to the Travel Expense Report.

If driving is the mode of travel the departure time to and from the event should be documented on the Voucher for GSA check when the traveler is receiving day before and after allowance. When driving in a district vehicle the operator should sign out a fuel credit card and EZ-Pass from the district office to avoid any unnecessary cash layouts during travel. Tolls will only be reimbursed for officials traveling that have NOT received GSA money. However EZ-Pass and fuel credit cards must be returned to the district office by the next business day with all proper receipts.

Meals

Because food in some cities is more expensive than in others, the interpretation should not be that the maximum will be spent in each instance. The guideline maximum not to be exceeded means just that.

1. Members traveling on official business shall be reimbursed for meal expenses (including gratuities) at a rate up to the daily maximum set by the Board of \$100.00 per day.
2. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.
3. Time limits have been set for meal reimbursements on the first and last day of travel:
 - A. Meals will be allowed while on authorized travel when the time of departure from home at the beginning of a trip occurs before the following hours:
 - Breakfast 7:00 a.m.
 - Lunch 11:00 a.m.
 - Dinner 6:00 p.m.
 - B. Meals will be allowed while on authorized travel when the time of return to home at the conclusion of a trip occurs after the following hours:
 - Breakfast 8:00 a.m.
 - Lunch 12:00 p.m.
 - Dinner 7:00 p.m .
 - C. The Travel Expense Report must indicate the specific time of departure from home and the specific time of return to home.

5. The cost of meals for Fire District personnel is covered however; the cost incurred by the member's family is not reimbursable.

6. In the alternative the Board reserves the right to set a per diem meal incidental expense rate based upon the Government Services Administration rate for per diem meals and incidental expenses at the location and in that case the traveling personnel will receive the meal allowance and will not be required to supply receipts. This option will only be available if approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners for the travel event. When the Board sets a per diem rate for an event under this rule, the per diem dollar limit for the location set by the Government Services Administration and not the maximum daily rate of \$100.00 listed above will apply.

Personal Vehicles

Board must pre approve over district vehicles.

1. Personally owned vehicles may be used for approved business travel unless the Board determines that travel by automobile is not the most cost effective and reasonable means of travel for the particular event. Mileage, round trip from the member's home to the activity and required mileage at the destination are reimbursable items.

2. Mileage reimbursement shall include all costs with the exception of tolls and parking. A per mile dollar figure will be approved yearly by the Board of Fire Commissioners at the organizational meeting. The rate will be based upon the applicable rate set by the Internal Revenue Service and in no event shall be higher than that rate. The rate set by the Internal Revenue Service for business

Telephone

The actual expenditure for necessary Fire District business calls from public or private telephones is reimbursable. Personal calls are not reimbursable. However, a member traveling on business shall be authorized to make one call home at District expense each day that he or she is away on District business.

Other Incidentals and Emergency Expenses

1. Costs of a business nature for such additional items as handling of baggage, parking, tolls and gratuities not included under meals/lodging are allowable. Receipts should be obtained for tolls and attached to the Travel Expense Report.

2. Tips to bellmen, porters, drivers, etc. are reimbursable. Tips related to another expense such as meals, taxi fares etc. shall be included in the total cost of the related expense.

3. The Board reserves the right to authorize other necessary travel expenses that relate to the business needs of the Fire District.

4. In the event of some unforeseen emergency or natural disaster occurring at the location of the event, the Board of Fire Commissioners reserves the authority to approve extraordinary expenses for traveling personnel unable to complete their business travel based upon normally accepted travel rules. Personnel may make arrangements to return home early if early warnings of a pending emergency or natural disaster permit, and in fact, should make every effort to do so. Personnel confronted by such a situation must make every effort to contact the District office in order to keep the Fire District advised of their status.

Special Rules

Special Rules for Volunteer Firefighter Out of State Training In 2006 Section 72-g of the General Municipal Law which governs sending volunteer firefighters to training schools and seminars was amended. The amendment sets new parameters when firefighters are sent out of state to attend a training school or seminar. The Board must determine with regard to out of state training for volunteer firefighters that the training;

1. Is necessary and in the public interest, and
2. Is not available within a reasonable distance and time period in the state.

The Chief will submit a report to the Board of Fire Commissioners at an official meeting thereof when he or she requests the attendance of such volunteer firefighters at an out of state training event detailing why the training attendance is necessary and in the public interest, and his or her research that has revealed that the training or a suitable substitute for same is not available within a reasonable distance and time period in the state.

Thus, Board approvals for such training will state in the minutes of the meeting that these requirements have been met. After completion of the training the Chief must send a report on the training to the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (“OFPC”) on the form provided by that office and a copy of the report shall be filed with the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Training Schools and Seminars As Opposed to Conferences and Conventions

The above rules on out of state travel shall pertain to sending volunteer firefighters of the rank of captain and below to training schools and seminars. Chiefs, district officers and employees may attend conferences and conventions in New York State and outside of New York State in accordance with the requirements set forth in Section 77-b of the General Municipal Law, which does not require the findings described about for volunteer firefighter training/travel.

District Credit Card Use While on Travel is Prohibited

Except in case of an emergency and only with prior approval of the Board of Fire Commissioners, the use of District credit cards is prohibited while on District travel. This includes using District credit cards for additional hotel expenses (such as room service) and all other types of meal and incidental travel expenses.

Arrangements With Other Fire Districts

Members of the Wading River Fire Department are not to enter in to travel arrangements/reservations with other fire districts. Any member doing so will be responsible for any and all costs incurred as a result of doing so. The Wading River Fire District will not be liable, nor will they pay for any travel expense arranged for by, through, or in conjunction with another fire district.

The District Manager Makes all Travel Arrangements

This includes all transportation and lodging reservations, all holds on rooms, and all other arrangements for travel other than meals and daily incidental expenses. No member is to make any travel arrangement or reservation. (This includes room “holds” that may not require immediate payment.)

All Travel Requests and Arrangements Must Follow the Appropriate Process

Any member who chooses to travel with the Fire District must be proactive and is personally responsible to allow enough time to follow the process to obtaining the necessary approvals to travel as outlined below.

- a) All members (including line officers and assistant chiefs) who choose to travel should submit all information, including the desired dates of departure and return and any other travel request details, through the chain of command to the Chief.
- b) The Chief shall review and compile any additional information. All information should be complete at the time it is submitted to the Chief. This is the last opportunity to make changes to the travel request. Once all information is complete, the Chief will then present the travel request to the Board of Fire Commissioners for approval.
- c) If approved by the Board, the complete request is delivered to the District Manager to make the necessary reservations.

Completion of travel

Upon completion of the out of state training by volunteer firefighters below the rank of Assistant Chief the Chief must file a report on the training with the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

(OFPC) on a form provided by that office, for all out of state training. A copy of this report shall also be filed with the Board of Fire Commissioners.

EZ-Pass and fuel credit cards must be returned to the district office by the next business day with all proper receipts.

Any material that may be obtained during travel that may be or is of interest to any other official should be forwarded to the District Secretary for dissemination to others IE hand outs computer disks ECT.

When submitting your Travel Expense Report if you are claiming to have money owed to you from the travel you must submit a voucher claim along with all other material as outlined in this policy.

As per the District Attorney of the County of Suffolk in the state of New York from March 2007 until March 2012 all travel vouchers will be reviewed for accuracy and compliance with the law by an independent auditor at the expense of the Fire District.

Cancellation policy

Any representative of the Fire District who cannot fulfill the obligation of attending any sponsored training class or conference will be responsible to incur any costs of the

- a. travel,
- b. lodging,
- c. training class that the District cannot be reimburse for.

The BOFC will make the final decision pertaining to “credits” that may be offered by the sponsoring organization.

Note: If room availability is a concern at the travel destination, then you are responsible to follow the aforementioned process well in advance of the travel to ensure lodging availability. Failure to submit travel requests well in advance does not constitute a valid reason to deviate from this process.

Travel Policy Acknowledgment

I have received, read, understood, and agree to abide by the Wading Rive Fire District's Travel Policy while planning for and traveling on Fire District business.

Print Name

Signature

Date

A copy of this signed form must be on file with the District Office in order for a member to travel on Fire District business and at the Fire District's expense.

TO: _____

FROM: *The Wading River Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners*

RE: *Planned Business Travel to* _____

Departing on ____/____/____ and Returning on ____/____/____

DATE: ____/____/____

Attached is a copy of the Fire District Travel Expense Policy and Procedure

WITHIN TWO (2) WEEKS OF YOUR RETURN FROM AN AUTHORIZED TRIP YOU MUST SUBMIT A DETAILED TRAVEL EXPENSE REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH FIRE DISTRICT POLICY.

Arrangements for your travel have been made as follows:

Lodging

Lodging reservations to be made by the Fire District Manager.

Payment for lodging to be made by the Fire District.

You have been authorized by the Board to make lodging reservations in accordance with this policy.

You have been authorized by the Board to make payment for lodging and submit original lodging payment receipt for reimbursement.

Lodging is not required for this trip.

Travel/Transportation

Travel reservations (airplane, train, etc) to be made by the Fire District Manager.

Payment for travel to be made by the Fire District.

You have been authorized by the Board to make travel reservations in accordance with this policy.

You have been authorized by the Board to make payment for travel and submit original travel payment receipt for reimbursement.

Travel arrangements are not required for this trip.

Car Rental

Rental car reservations to be made by the Fire District Manager.

Payment for rental car to be made by the Fire District.

You have been authorized by the Board to make rental car reservations in accordance with this policy.

You have been authorized by the Board to make payment for a rental car and submit original travel payment receipt for reimbursement.

Rental car arrangements are not required for this trip.

Meal & Incidental Expenses

You have been authorized by the Board to receive a per diem meal and incidental expense rate based upon the Government Services Administration rate of \$_____ per day for _____ days for a total of \$_____ for per diem meals and incidental expenses at the travel location and in this case you will not be required to supply receipts with your travel expense report.

You have been authorized by the Board to receive a travel advance of \$_____ per day for _____ days for a total of \$_____ and are required to supply receipts along with your travel expense report.

I have received, read, and understand the Fire District’s Travel Expense Policy and Procedures and I consent that by traveling on official business of the Wading River Fire District, I agree to abide by those policies and procedures and I understand that Fire District personnel must always exercise good judgment when traveling and using District Funds and that I should contact the Fire District Office if I have any questions.

(Print name)

(Signature)

___/___/___

(Date)

— Signed copy to be retained by Fire District Manager, copy to Chief’s Office, copy to firefighter —

RELATED POLICES:

- 3.2 Refreshment Policy
- 3.3 Sales Tax Procedure Policy
- 3.4 Credit Card Policy
- 1.12 Disciplinary Procedure Policy

Adopted by the Wading River Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners on Monday, 09/26/11.

Edward Frost, Chairman
Timothy Deveny, Commissioner
Michael Harrigan, Commissioner
Thomas Lateulere, Commissioner
James Meier, Commissioner