

Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

Travel and Training Expenses

Objective:

To provide all personnel with an understanding of the Town of Falmouth Travel and Training Policy adopted on July 1, 2016.

General Information:

Town employees may incur travel and/or training expenses while conducting official Town business or enhancing professional skills and qualifications by attending schools, training programs, conferences or professional meetings. The purpose of this policy is to establish fair and consistent guidelines for authorization and reimbursement of travel and training expenses.

Guidelines:

- A. **Travel Responsibility** - Each Department shall be responsible for making travel, hotel, and conference arrangements.
- B. **Training and Travel Plan** - At budget preparation time, each Department Head shall submit training and travel amounts within its operating budget to the Town Manager for the coming year. Department Heads will manage the travel and training approved for their Department's budget.
- C. **Training and Travel Categories and Priorities** – Funding will be allocated in the following priority order:
 - 1. Official travel necessary to conduct Town business.
 - 2. Training legally required by state, federal or equipment use mandates.
 - 3. Training essential to the performance of the employees work assignment.
 - 4. Training required by professional organizations for an employee to maintain a certification of benefit to the Town.
 - 5. Training, seminars, workshops, association meetings or conferences that provide “direct identifiable benefit to the Town”.

Except in the case of emergencies or circumstances beyond the employee's control, any employee who fails to attend or contact the Department Head to cancel any prearranged accommodations and registrations for any meeting, conference, workshop or seminar shall be responsible for reimbursement to the Town.

Reimbursement Procedures

The following procedures apply to all employees of the Town of Falmouth for travel and reimbursement while on official business:

- A. A Travel and Expense Form must be submitted to the Finance Department by the employee. The form will require the employee's signature affirming

compliance with Town policy. All travel and training must receive approval from the Department Head and Town Manager/Assistant Town Manager.

- B. All travel will be done by the most cost-effective method and mileage will be computed by the shortest direct route to a location.
1. **Town Vehicles** - A Town vehicle will be the preferred mode of transportation. Employees will be reimbursed for actual expenses paid for gas.
 2. **Personal Vehicle** - Use of a personal vehicle for travel on Town business will be reimbursed at the current rate allowed by the IRS. Reimbursement shall not exceed the costs which would have been incurred using an efficient and least costly means of transportation. When an employee at the beginning of a normal work day drives directly to a day conference from a point other than Town offices, the employee will be reimbursed for the distance to the conference minus the employees commuting distance multiplied by the current rate allowed by the IRS, if that amount is greater than \$0. When two or more employees are traveling together, reimbursement for mileage will be payable only to the owner of the vehicle used.
 3. **Air Travel** - All air travel shall be by the most economic rates. Airline tickets will be purchased using the town credit card or the employee's personal credit card (reimbursed by the Town). Airfares must be purchased as far in advance as possible to guarantee the lowest rates. The Town of Falmouth will not reimburse an employee for an airline ticket purchased less than 60 days in advance of the departure date. Because conference and training travel is forecasted in advance, there is no reason for last minute travel unless there are extenuating circumstances. The Town Manager or his/her designee has the ability to waive the 60 day purchase rule for a valid reason. If air travel is the most economic method of transportation, employees electing to travel by personal vehicle will be reimbursed at an amount equal to what airfare would have been.
 4. **Rental Vehicles** - Rental vehicles will be allowed, but only under exceptional circumstances related to business necessity, not personal convenience. Use of rental vehicles will require prior approval of the Department Head. If an employee rents a car, the smallest car available must be reserved at the lowest rate. If an employee reserves a sub-compact and only a midsize is available, the employee can accept the upgrade as long as there is no price difference. Employees will not be reimbursed for SUVs, Minivans, or luxury vehicles.

5. **Meal Expenses** - Meal expense will be reimbursed for employees engaged in official Town business or while on approved travel or training or at a work-related function. Employees attending half-day training will not be reimbursed for meals unless travel time overlaps with typical time of day for one of the three main meals. Employees have two choices for meal reimbursements.
 - i. **Option A** - The Town will provide a per-diem amount of \$75.00 per day based on a general guideline of \$15.00 for breakfast, \$20.00 for lunch, and \$40.00 for dinner. No alcohol will be reimbursed. This is a taxable benefit and an employee will be responsible for payment of state and federal taxes. If the employee chooses this option, no receipts are needed to substantiate the meal purchases. Because prices vary by city and geographic region, an employee might need additional money to cover the cost of food. Any requests above the \$75.00 amount must be explained on the Travel and Expense Form. Employees must request the per-diem money from the Finance Department three weeks before the departure date. Failure to comply with this deadline will force the employee to choose Option B for reimbursement.
 - ii. **Option B** – An employee can get reimbursed after travel by providing all meal receipts. Using the same daily meal amounts and guidelines in Option A, the employee can use a town or personal credit card for reimbursement. The employee will not receive a cash meal advance, but will also not be responsible for paying taxes.
6. **Lodging** - Expense will be allowed for lodging that is necessary and appropriate to the purpose of the trip.
7. **Reservations** - Lodging arrangements using the lowest rates available and requesting a government discount on all rooms. Payment shall be made by personal credit card, Town credit card, or by direct billing to the Town. Use of the conference hotel is encouraged whenever possible.
8. **Restrictions** - The following restrictions shall apply to lodging:
 - i. Lodging expenses are generally not allowed within a seventy-five mile radius of the Town limits for conferences, seminars, meetings or workshops with a duration of one day or less. With the approval of the Department Head, lodging will be allowed if it is more cost effective.

- ii. In the event the employee takes his/her family members to a conference, the Town will pay only the single room rate. Employees must reimburse the Town for any amounts charged to the Town for family members.
- iii. Employees choosing to travel to the conference site the day before the conference begins for their convenience, will not be reimbursed for any additional travel expense or considered to be on paid time. If the conference or meeting begins on or before 8:30 AM and the site is more than a one hour drive from the Town, employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses.
- iv. The Town will not reimburse the extra travel costs incurred by an individual on authorized travel who extends the trip for personal vacation or other personal reasons unless a net reduction in travel costs can be demonstrated (e.g. staying extra day(s) reduces the airline fare by more than the cost of the stay).

9. **Registration Fees** - The cost of the registration should be included on the Travel and Expense Form. After authorization from the Department Head is received, a completed registration form should be submitted to the Finance Department to make arrangements for payment or direct billing to the Town unless the arrangements were made on the Town credit card.

10. **Miscellaneous Expenses** – The following reasonable travel expenses shall be reimbursed if they are essential (receipts must be provided):

- i. Garage and parking fees
- ii. Taxi expense
- iii. Postage, printing and telephone charges for Town business
- iv. Other business-related expenses that are documented and approved by the Department Head.
- v. Tips for meals not to exceed 20% (if using the receipt method for reimbursement)
- vi. Transit expense

Non-reimbursable expenses include, but are not limited to:

- i. Personal entertainment
- ii. Personal phone calls
- iii. Laundry services
- iv. Traffic and parking tickets
- v. Theft, loss, or damage to personal effects
- vi. Trip insurance policies

These guidelines may be changed or altered by the Fire Chief at any time.