

UNION GAP FIRE DEPARTMENT

OPERATIONS MANUAL		TRAINING SECTION	
BOOK 1	SUBJECT: Tuition Reimbursement Policy	CODE 709	PAGE 1 OF 4
DATE EFFECTIVE: 7/27/09		LAST REVISION: 7/27/09	CHIEF'S INITIALS:

PURPOSE: The City is dedicated to providing personal and professional development opportunities for all volunteers of the Fire Department. Reimbursement will be for courses related to a specific Department job or function.

While tuition reimbursement is not the only training and development resource available to volunteers, it is an essential benefit, providing additional learning opportunities.

A. TAX IMPLICATIONS

1. Depending on the IRS tax codes in effect, volunteers' reimbursement may be subject to income and FICA tax withholding.
2. For guidance on the tax laws related to tuition reimbursement, volunteers should contact their accountant or tax advisor.

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. Fire Department volunteers who are in good standing and have fulfilled the original probationary requirements for their positions are eligible for tuition reimbursement.

C. MAXIMUM ANNUAL REIMBURSEMENT

1. The total maximum reimbursable amount will be \$1,000 within any calendar year for each volunteer.

D. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

1. College courses
 - a. Reimbursement for course work at an accredited college or university must receive prior approval of the Fire Chief.
 - b. An accredited college or university is one that is recognized by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, or one of five other regional accrediting associations including Northwest Association, Middle States Association, New England Association, Southern Association, or Western Association. Accreditation information is available directly from the school.

2. Vocational Courses

- a. The cost of Department position-related vocational or professional training courses or programs will be reimbursed up to 100% of the annual maximum reimbursable sum. Reimbursement for vocational courses/programs must also be approved prior to registering for the courses or programs.

3. Special Courses

- a. In some situations, reimbursement may be approved for courses that do not meet the above descriptions. These situations may include courses like a preparation class for a certification examination or a job-related course provided by a non-academic institution. Reimbursement for special courses shall be at a rate determined by the Fire Chief.

4. Course Eligibility

- a. In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, in order to be approved for reimbursement, a course must also meet one of the following criteria:
 - 1). The course is directly related to the volunteer's current position with the Department.
 - 2). The course will make the volunteer more promotable within the Department and is related to a current position, which is within the volunteer's realistic promotional line.

E. COVERED EXPENSES

1. Tuition reimbursement includes the cost of tuition. Other costs are not covered by this policy, which include but are not limited to the following: parking, transportation, recreation fees, lab fees, student fees, and textbooks.

F. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

1. In addition to the requirements previously described, the following criteria applies to tuition reimbursement:
 - a. Course approval shall be at the discretion of the Fire Chief, based on available funds.
 - b. To qualify for reimbursement for a college course, the volunteer must receive a grade of "C" or better. Official grade reports must be submitted with the request for tuition reimbursement.
 - c. To qualify for reimbursement, the applicant must be a Union Gap Fire Department volunteer at the time the request for reimbursement is submitted.

- d. Requests for tuition reimbursement must be submitted using the Employee Expense Reimbursement Voucher within 90 days after the successful completion of the course.
- e. Volunteers shall remain in an active, good-standing position with the Department in exchange for tuition reimbursement. Each \$1,000 shall obligate the volunteer to one year of service. Volunteers separating prior to completing this obligation shall be financially liable for reimbursing the City on a prorated basis.

G. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

1. Volunteers who receive financial assistance for their education from another source must disclose the source and amount on their Tuition Reimbursement Form. If volunteers are receiving 100% funding for their education from another source, the City will not provide reimbursement. Under certain circumstances, it is possible that the tuition reimbursement program can be coordinated with other funding sources. In all instances, total financial assistance and tuition reimbursement will not exceed the educational expenditures incurred.

H. HOW TO APPLY FOR TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

1. Complete the Tuition Reimbursement Form.
2. Submit this completed form to the Fire Chief for approval.
3. When the Fire Chief returns the approved Tuition Reimbursement Form to the volunteer (or otherwise informs the volunteer of course approval), he/she may then enroll in the course.
4. Within 90 days after successful completion of the course, attach a copy of the payment/sales receipts and evidence of satisfactory course completion, if applicable, to the previously approved Tuition Reimbursement Form (or other evidence of prior course approval). Forward the documentation to the Department secretary for processing.

I. FIRE SERVICE INTERN PROGRAM

1. Students from an approved fire service college program make application to the Fire Department Intern program.
2. Selected students make application to the Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter.
3. Once approved as a volunteer firefighter - Intern, the Intern is assigned to a working shift schedule that generally parallels the career schedule.
4. The Intern completes a minimum of (seven) 24-hour shifts per month to qualify for Intern reimbursement. After the seventh shift, the Intern may schedule

additional shifts and receive volunteer reimbursement points the same way all other volunteers receive points. Flexibility for assigned shifts will be considered for school tests, family emergencies, sickness and fire department testing.

5. To receive Intern reimbursement the Intern must maintain a “B” grade or higher and have satisfactory performance on assigned Intern shifts. Interns will be under the supervision of the shift duty officer, normally a Captain.
6. Intern reimbursement shall be up to \$500.00 per month which assists in the costs of tuition, books and shift food expenses. For the remainder of 2009, Yakima County Fire District 11 has agreed to fund 50% of the monthly reimbursement costs and may continue the reimbursement program in future years.
7. This program is not in any way a replacement for career staffing. The intent of the Intern program is to provide college students an opportunity to apply fire service training in a real Fire Department setting receiving college credit for their degree.