Woodland Hills Operations Policy and Procedure

TITLE	POLICY NUMBER-ADOPTED
Establish a standard for providing per diem for seasonal firefighters	2025-03- November 18, 2025

Purpose

This policy establishes standards for providing Per Diem allowances to Woodland Hills City's paid seasonal firefighters when deployed on wildland or mutual-aid assignments outside the City. The purpose is to ensure fairness, consistency, and compliance with reimbursement rates and documentation requirements established by the Reimbursing Agency (e.g., Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands – FFSL, U.S. Forest Service, or other interagency partners).

Scope

This policy applies to all seasonal-paid firefighters of the Woodland Hills Fire Department assigned to reimbursable incidents outside the City's boundaries, including in-state and out-of-state wildland fire deployments.

Definitions

• Per Diem: A daily allowance provided to cover meals, incidental expenses, and/or lodging during authorized travel or deployment.
• Reimbursing Agency: The external agency responsible for compensating Woodland Hills City for personnel, apparatus, and related expenses (e.g., FFSL, BLM, USFS, FEMA).
• Advance Per Diem: Funds disbursed before deployment, based on expected duration and documentation.
• Post-Fire Per Diem: Funds disbursed after deployment based on actual days worked and agency reimbursement documentation.
• Paid – Seasonal Personnel vs. Volunteer Personnel: Paid – Seasonal personnel are those who are called up for mutual aid fires/EMS events, typically outside of city boundaries, to aid assistance. Volunteer personnel are those typically live within city boundaries (or proximity to city boundaries) and dispatched to fires via the Utah County paging system.

Policy Statement

Woodland Hills City may provide Per Diem payments to Paid - seasonal firefighters assigned to reimbursable incidents in accordance with this policy. Per Diem amounts and timing of payment shall be directly tied to the approved reimbursement rate and verified documentation from the Reimbursing Agency, or commit to pay, more than the amount authorized by the Reimbursing Agency. The City shall never pay or commit to pay more than the amount authorized by the

Reimbursing Agency , unless specifically put in writing.

Procedures

a. Eligibility

1. Seasonal firefighters are eligible for Per Diem only when they are:
   - Assigned to an authorized reimbursable incident outside Woodland Hills City; and
   - Listed on an official resource order or personnel manifest approved by the Fire Chief or their designee.
2. Per Diem does not apply to local or non-reimbursable incidents, unless otherwise specified, such as a Bald Mountain fire situation.

b. Rate of Per Diem

1. The City will use the daily Per Diem rate established by the Reimbursing Agency (e.g., FFSL, federal AD Pay Plan, or equivalent).
2. If the Reimbursing Agency specifies a maximum total reimbursement for personnel expenses, the City's Per Diem payments will not exceed that total amount, unless put in writing.
3. Any lodging costs reimbursed directly by the agency shall not also be Paid as Per Diem.

c. Advance Payment

1. The City may issue Per Diem in advance of deployment when:
   - Proper documentation is submitted (official resource order, estimated duration, and assignment authorization) to the fire chief; and
   - The Fire Chief, Director of Finance, and Mayor determine that issuing an advance is appropriate.
2. The amount advanced shall not exceed the estimated Per Diem authorized by the Reimbursing Agency for the documented period, unless specified in writing first.
3. Firefighters must submit receipts or documentation reconciling actual days worked within 10 business days after returning from deployment.
4. Any unused or overpaid Per Diem must be repaid to the City within two weeks of returning from assignment. If overpayment is NOT repaid within two weeks, the city may withhold this amount from the firefighter's paycheck.

d. Post-Fire Per Diem

1. Verification Required: Per Diem will generally be paid after the deployment is complete. Payment may be issued once the Fire Chief and Treasurer verifies:
   - The firefighter's actual assignment dates and hours worked; and
   - The total amount eligible for reimbursement from the paying agency.
2. Reimbursement Timing: The City does not need to receive funds from the paying agency before issuing Per Diem. A reimbursement of up to seventy-five percent (75%) may be made only after deployment documentation has been confirmed by the Fire Chief and Treasurer.
3. Payment Timeline: Per Diem will be processed through City payroll or issued separately via a check or ACH within three (3) weeks of the start of deployment.

e. Documentation and Recordkeeping

1. The Fire Chief shall maintain deployment records, including personnel rosters, resource orders, time reports, and any related reimbursement documents.
2. The City Treasurer or Finance Director shall retain all supporting documents for audit and compliance as outlined in the Utah Code.
3. Payments shall be coded and tracked by incident number or fire name for transparency and reconciliation.

Example of Calculation

Example: If a firefighter is deployed for 7 days and the Reimbursing Agency's approved Per Diem rate is $59/day, the total Per Diem would be $413. If the City receives documentation authorizing $413 for that firefighter, the City may pay that amount either in advance (with proper documentation) or after the assignment, upon verification.

Limitations

The City will never pay more Per Diem than is eligible for reimbursement by the paying agency, unless approved in writing beforehand. Any excess payment discovered during reconciliation must be repaid or deducted from future disbursements or employee payroll. This policy does not apply to volunteer firefighters or to non-reimbursable local responses.

On rare occasions, these paid seasonal personnel may be called to fight fires within the city boundaries.

Review and Amendment

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the Fire Chief and the Director of Finance, with any updates submitted to the City Council for approval.