

PURPOSE:

To describe benefits and procedures for the District's Workers' Compensation program.

POLICY

All District members will be covered by workers' compensation insurance to provide for payment of medical expenses and lost salary in the event of bodily injury.

AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY

The Fire Chief will interpret and administer the District's Workers' Compensation program. Officers are to ensure that (a) proper medical treatment is provided to any employee injured on the job, (b) all paperwork relating to an accident is properly completed, and (c) that all unsafe conditions that exist or may have contributed to an accident are corrected. Officers also have the responsibility of enforcing all safety regulations and completing the proper accident reports in accordance with District policy.

PROCEDURE

- I. Immediately following a work-related accident or illness, the supervisor in charge should ensure that the injured employee receives the appropriate medical treatment.
- II. If treatment is provided at an outside facility, another employee designated by the supervisor should accompany the employee to such facility. The facility rendering such treatment should be informed that the employee sustained a work-related injury or illness, and that it should be covered by workers' compensation insurance. The injured employee or accompanying employee, as appropriate, must provide the name and address of the District.
- III. Injured employees should complete an Injury and Accident Report (Form 801), which should be forwarded within 24 hours to the Deputy Chief of Operations.
- IV. If the illness or accident/injury results in lost work time, the employee may need to consult the Fire Chief before returning to regular duty depending on the severity of the illness or injury.

- 
- V. If an employee suffers an aggravation of a previously accepted workers' compensation injury, the employee must contact the Fire Chief within 24 hours of the injury. Once the aggravation is reported, the employee will follow the policies set forth for other on-the-job injuries.
- VI. Employees who are absent from work for five (5) shifts or more as a result of a serious injury or illness must follow the procedures set forth in the Fitness for Duty policy.
- VII. In the case of a work-related injury that requires that the employee receive medical attention, the District will pay the employee for any regular work time lost by the employee on the day of such accident.
- VIII. Return to Work and Light Duty Assignment
- A. On-the-Job Injury or Illness
1. Time lost due to an on-the-job injury will initially be paid from the employee's sick leave accruals. If the employee's sick leave accruals become exhausted, the employee's other paid leave may be used. When the District's Workers' Compensation carrier certifies that the injury or illness is job-related, the District will reimburse the employee's leave accruals for the time lost due to the injury or illness. If the employee remits time-loss payments to the employer, the District will pay the employee their current monthly salary during the time they are receiving workers' compensation time loss payments. Employees shall accrue sick leave at two-thirds the normal accrual rate while off work for an injury covered by workers' compensation.
  2. Upon notice of time loss, the employee's condition will be reviewed by the Fire Chief. Efforts will be made to return the employee to his or her regular position as quickly as possible, once a release to full duty is provided from the employee's healthcare provider. In cases where the employee may perform modified work assignments, but cannot yet return to regular duty, efforts will be made to place the employee in a modified work assignment (herein referred to as a "light duty" assignment).
  3. Refusal to return to a light duty assignment will only be permitted within the limits provided by the Family Medical Leave Act and State Workers' Compensation regulations and may result in the employee's losing all time-loss benefits provided by the District.
- B. Off-the-Job Injury or Illness

1. In the event that an employee is injured or becomes ill while not on duty, he or she may be eligible for light duty assignment.

C. Light Duty Assignment

1. The Fire Chief will oversee the availability and scheduling of light duty assignments. Light duty assignments will be determined based upon the District's priorities with additional consideration given to the employee's background, training, and expertise.
2. In cases of on-the-job injuries covered by Workers' Compensation, when the employee is released to light duty, he or she is required to report to work as directed by the District. Failure to report as directed may lead to disciplinary action, as well as loss of Workers' Compensation time-loss benefits.
3. The Fire Chief will assign a suitable light duty assignment as available and serve as the point of contact for all questions regarding light duty assignments and special considerations required by employees while on light duty assignment.
4. The employee, while on light duty, will be under the direct supervision of the Officer or supervisor overseeing the light duty assignment. Employees on light duty assignment are required to make contact at least once a week with the Fire Chief to provide an update on their performance, the light duty assignment, and their recovery.
5. Light duty assignments are generally limited to 90 days. If it is anticipated that an employee may be unable to perform their regular work assignment for a period beyond this time, he or she should consider the possibility of initiating the process for obtaining disability compensation. Time spent on a light duty assignment will not be counted toward the "pre-disability" waiting period by PERS.
6. No employee will work more than 40 hours per week while on a light duty assignment without prior written approval from his or her healthcare provider and the Fire Chief.
7. Should the return-to-work process require a release from the employee's healthcare provider, the employee should follow the medical certification protocols outlined within the District's Fitness for Duty Policy. Failure to follow these procedures may result in a delay in the employee's assignment to light duty or full duty.

Medical certification must be provided to both the employee's supervisor and the Fire Chief within 24 hours of receipt from the physician, so that additional arrangements may be made to facilitate the employee's return to work. Employees who are required to provide medical certification cannot return to work until they have contacted the Fire Chief or designee, and may be required to complete a Fitness Assessment and or Independent Medical Evaluation.

If an employee is required to complete an Independent Medical Evaluation, the District will pay for the evaluation.