

Santa Barbara City Fire Department - Standard Operating Procedures <b>Training Operations</b>	Code: <b>T-IX-1</b>
<b>Tuition Reimbursement</b>	
Chpt: IX Training Administration	Revised: 4/16/13 Pages: 4

## I. PURPOSE

A. To define and explain the 2 tuition re-imbursement policies available to SBFD personnel.

## II. SBFD TUITION RE-IMBURSEMENT POLICY

### A. Authority

1. Section #51 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara City Firefighters Association Inc., entitled “Tuition Reimbursement” stipulates:

a) “The city will provide up to a \$400 reimbursement per fiscal year and up to \$800 maximum carry over, for the costs of textbooks and tuition for fire service related courses that receive prior written approval of the Fire Chief, and are satisfactorily completed. Tuition reimbursement may also be used for the costs of lodging, meals, and mileage for fire service related courses that are satisfactorily completed and receive prior written approval of the Fire Chief. Reimbursement for the costs of books on the current Fire Engineer and Fire Captain promotional study list, and for texts and study guides for fire technology/management classes that would improve the employee’s skill, and thus benefit to the City, will also be permitted. The tuition reimbursement policies shall be established by the Fire Chief and become part of the Santa Barbara City Fire Department’s Standard Operating Procedures Manual. Reimbursement for lodging, meals and mileage shall be based upon the City of Santa Barbara Travel and Expense Reimbursement Policy for City Employees.”

### B. Procedure

1. To facilitate administration of this program, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

a) Department members intending to submit a future claim need to receive **PRIOR APPROVAL**. A Pre-Approval Tuition Reimbursement Form ([Form T-IX -1](#)) shall be filled out and sent to the Fire Chief for approval.

b) The Fire Chief or his designee will review the submitted information for the fire-related content required by the M.O.U., and approve or deny relevancy in writing and/or interview with the applicant. If a request is

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denied you may appeal your claim to the Division Chief of Operations, who will review the claim with both the Training Officer and the Fire Chief.

c) Reimbursement requests for transportation and per diem expenses for out of state training will be considered, if no comparable training is available in California.

2. Once the approved course has been completed, submit the following information to the training officer:

- a) A memo requesting reimbursement
- b) Proof of satisfactory completion by the sponsoring institution
- c) Tuition receipt issued by the sponsoring institution
- d) Receipt for textbooks required by the instructor
- e) Documentation of Pre-Approval form

3. Enter training hours into FireHouse using appropriate subject heading. All training, even training received out of the area, must be logged into FireHouse.

4. Receipts for lodging, meals and mileage shall be submitted to the Senior office specialist in charge of finances for approval. Once expenses are approved, they shall be submitted to the Training Officer.

5. An employee wishing to purchase books that are in accordance with the MOU must fill out a tuition reimbursement form ([Form T-IX-1](#)). The book shall be presented to the T/O to be stamped.

### **III. CITY OF SANTA BARBARA EDUCATIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM POLICY**

A. The City of Santa Barbara is committed to helping employees be more effective and efficient in their current jobs and prepare for advancement opportunities. The Educational Reimbursement Program will provide funding to assist employees in completing work-related courses, degrees, or certificates.

1. **Determining Eligibility:** The employee is either a permanent full-time or permanent part-time City of Santa Barbara employee who has successfully completed the one-year probationary period following original appointment to City service and has written permission to participate from his or her Department Head.

2. **Determining Eligible Courses:** The Program is designed to assist in paying for courses, degrees, or certificates that are related to the individual's employment

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with the City. General education courses for a work-related degree are eligible. For example, if an employee is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration, a history course is eligible for reimbursement. If an employee is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in history or a field unrelated to current employment, a history course would not be reimbursable to the employee.

- a) The courses should improve the capacity of the employee to perform current job duties or to prepare for promotional advancement within the City. Courses that the employee is required by the supervisor to attend during work hours are not eligible courses and may be paid through the department training budget at the discretion of the Department Head.
  - b) The Department Head determines if the course relates to the current position or promotional advancement within the City. Upon approval from the Department Head, the Human Resources Manager will have the sole discretion to approve an application for reimbursement. The approval will be based on whether the application satisfies the Program criteria and funds are available.
  - c) All coursework must be scheduled during off-duty hours. Depending on the potential impact of an employee's absence on department operations and workload, the employee's Department Head may allow the employee to rearrange work schedules or use accrued vacation, CTO, personal leave, or holiday (Police only) time to help accommodate coursework during off-duty hours.
3. Eligible Expenses: The Program will reimburse the expenses of tuition, required textbooks, registration fees and other fees directly related to the course. Parking fees and travel expenses are not eligible.
  4. Program Budget: Funding for the program is limited to the total amount designated by the City Administrator. Course approval is contingent on the availability of funds in the Educational Reimbursement Program fund in the Human Resources Office.
  5. Eligibility Period: Courses will be approved based on the fiscal year in which the class begins contingent on available funds. Reimbursement funding for approved courses will apply to the fiscal year in which the class is approved. Any other costs incurred, either before, after, or in excess of the approved reimbursement funds from the City are the responsibility of the employee.
  6. Reimbursement Amount: The City will reimburse up to \$1,000 per fiscal year of eligible, pre-approved costs. This amount will be contingent on the total funding available for reimbursements.
  7. Completion of Course: To be eligible for reimbursement, the employee must complete approved courses in a satisfactory manner. Proof of course completion

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is required. A grade of a “C” or better or a “pass” if the course is held in a pass/fail format is required for reimbursement.

8. Reimbursement Process: A participating employee will complete and submit an [Educational Reimbursement Application Form](#) to their Department Head for approval. Once the Department Head has approved the Application, the Application will be sent to the Human Resources Office for final approval and confirmation that funds are available before the course starts. The Human Resources Manager or a designee has sole approval of courses to reimburse.

a) Following the completion of the course, the employee will submit receipts and proof of a completed course with a satisfactory grade to his or her Department Head within 90 days of the approved course completion date. Valid receipts are original receipts from a school or organization approved by the department. The Department Head will send the appropriate form, claim and receipts to the Finance Department.

9. Employment: To be reimbursed for an approved course, employees must be employed by the City at the time a reimbursement request is submitted, following the completion of the course.

10. Taxation: [Reimbursements provided by this program may be](#) subject to state and federal [income](#) taxes. [More information regarding taxation of these reimbursements should be obtained from a licensed tax professional.](#)