

SPOKANE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 8

Policy

P10.10.11
Use of District Resources



Adopted: 07/11/17

Board Chair:
Commissioner:
Commissioner:

[Handwritten signatures]

Policy: The term “District resources”, as used in this Policy, includes District station facilities, equipment, communications systems, computer hardware and software, telecommunications hardware, software and data, internet access services, telephone and electronic mail systems and all District tangible and intangible property. The term “personnel” means employees, volunteers and commissioners.

1. District personnel are obligated to conserve and protect District resources for the benefit of the public interest, rather than their private interests. Use of District resources shall be limited to uses that support organizational effectiveness, are reasonable and of negligible cost, and uses that do not violate ethics laws or this Policy. Responsibility and accountability for the appropriate use of District resources ultimately rests with the individual District personnel, or with the District personnel who authorize such use.
2. District personnel may not use District resources including any person, money, or property under the personnel’s official control or direction or in his or her custody for private benefit or gain of himself or herself or any other person. This prohibition does not apply to the use of public resources to benefit another person as part of the personnel’s official duties.
3. The following are prohibited uses of District resources:
 - a. Any use for the purpose of conducting an outside business;
 - b. A use for the purpose of supporting, promoting, or soliciting for an outside organization or group unless such use is consistent with this Policy;
 - c. Any campaign or political use;
 - d. Commercial uses such as advertising or selling; or
 - e. An illegal activity.
 - f. Personnel may not use District resources for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Such a use of District resources is not authorized by this Policy and is specifically prohibited by RCW 42.17A.555.
 - g. Personnel may not make private use of any District property that has been removed from District facilities or other official duty stations, even if there is no cost to the District.
 - h. Personnel may not make private use of any District property that is consumable such as paper, envelopes or spare parts, even if the actual cost to the District is de minimis.

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Jan C. Blay

Example 1: A volunteer operates an outside business. Every day she makes or receives business calls on her District telephone. All of the calls are local calls. This is an ethical violation. The member is conducting a private business on District time, which is a cost to the District.

Example 2: After working hours, an employee uses the office computer and printer to prepare client billings for a private business using his own paper. This is an ethical violation. Although use of the office computer and printer may result in a negligible cost to the District, conducting a private business is an inappropriate use of District resources.

Example 3: A commissioner is active in a local PTA organization that holds fundraising events to send children to the nation's capital. Although a parental contribution is expected, the more a parent raises, the less his or her contribution. The commissioner uses District e-mail to solicit contributions for her child. This is an ethical violation. The commissioner is using District resources to further a private interest and to promote an outside organization.

Example 4: District equipment includes a DVD player. One night an employee takes the machine home to watch videos of her family vacation. This is an ethical violation. Although there is no cost to the District personnel may not make private use of District equipment removed from District facilities or other official duty station.

Example 5: A volunteer is assigned to attend a conference in another city away from his or her usual duty station. To perform official duties the volunteer takes a District laptop computer. While away, the volunteer uses the computer to do tax work for a private client. This is an ethical violation. Although it is permissible for a volunteer to use the laptop at a temporary duty station, it is not permissible for the volunteer to perform work related to his or her outside business on the laptop.

Example 6: An employee routinely uses the Internet to manage his personal investment portfolio and communicate information to his broker. This is an ethical violation. Use of the Internet is limited to official District business, and there is a cost to the District for the employee's time while he or she conducts personal business.

4. Subject to the prohibitions in this Policy, District personnel may make occasional but limited use of District resources only if:
 - a. There is no cost to the District;
 - b. The use of District resources does not interfere with the performance of the personnel's official duties;
 - c. The use is brief in duration and does not disrupt or distract from the conduct of District business due to volume or frequency;

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John C. Kelly", is written over a horizontal line.

- d. The use does not compromise the security or integrity of District information or software;
- e. The District may authorize a use that promotes organizational effectiveness or enhances the job-related skills of District personnel as provided in this Policy.
- f. District personnel may use computers and electronic mail provided such use conforms to ethical standards and does not violate the prohibitions contained in this Policy.

Example 7: An employee makes a local telephone call or sends an e-mail communication to his home to make sure his children have arrived home safely from school. This is not an ethical violation. There is no cost to the District, and because either the call or the e-mail is brief in duration, it does not interfere with the performance of official duties.

Example 8: An employee uses the District computer to send electronic mail to another employee regarding the agenda for a District meeting that both will attend. She also wishes the other member a happy birthday. This is not an ethical violation. The personal message is de minimis and improves organizational effectiveness by allowing informal communication among members.

Example 9: Every spring a group of members meets during lunch to organize a District softball team. The meeting is held in a conference room that is not needed for District business during the lunch hour. This is not an ethical violation. There is no cost to the District and the meeting does not interfere with the performance of official duties because it is during a lunch hour.

Example 10: A District determines that an evening class will enhance the job skills of a volunteer, and allows the volunteer to use her office computer to do homework. The volunteer prints her homework using the office printer and her own paper. This is not an ethical violation. The use of the office computer and printer will result in some cost to the District, but the cost is negligible and the volunteer is using her own paper. Because the class will enhance the volunteer's job skills, the effectiveness of the organization is improved. Since the activity takes place after working hours, it will not interfere with the performance of the volunteer's official duties.

5. The Fire District is often requested to participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events either through donations, use of resources or other participation. As a municipal corporation, the Fire District is restricted by the Washington State Constitution's prohibition on the gifting of public funds. See Article 8, Section 7. However, The Board of Commissioners has determined that participation in certain events and support of community organizations is important

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to the organizational effectiveness of the Fire District. The community relations benefits received by the District provide a corresponding benefit to the Fire District. The District's participation in such events shall be governed by the following basic principles:

a. Community Events and Fundraiser Participation.

i. Organizational Effectiveness. The District shall only participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events if the participation promotes Organizational Effectiveness. Organizational Effectiveness relates to the Fire District's mission of providing fire protection, fire prevention, fire suppression and emergency medical services. Activities that enhance or augment the District's ability to perform its mission by educating the public, promoting a positive perception of the District or enhancing the job-related skills of District personnel will be deemed to be organizationally effective.

ii. De Minimis Use of Resources. The District shall only participate in local and regional fundraisers and community events when the use of District resources is de minimis. Because of the prohibition on gifting, use of District resources in support of events that promote organizational effectiveness must not exceed a de minimis use. In order for a use of District resources to be considered de minimis, the use must be of minimal cost, not interfere with the performance of the District mission, be brief in frequency and duration, not disrupt the activities of other employees and not compromise the security or integrity of District information. The following non-exclusive list of resource uses are declared to be de minimis uses. The list is intended to provide examples, rather than be an exhaustive list:

Example 11: Use of a District vehicle in a parade, school fair or community event.

Example 12: Use of a District vehicle for a ride-along donation for a local community organization fundraiser provided that the ride along does not interfere with the performance of the District's mission.

Example 13: Use of personal protective equipment and vehicles to participate in local or regional events that promote health and training of employees, while providing a positive public outreach for the District, such as the Columbia Tower Stair Climb.

Example 14: Use of station facilities as auction donations to charitable or service organizations and/or station tours.

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Example 15: Use of on-duty personnel in a local school reading program, provided personnel are able to respond directly from the school.