

	TRAVIS COUNTY ESD #5 MANCHACA FIRE RESCUE Department Policy	F301.1
	Authorized by:  Fire Chief Chris Barron	Effective: 6-18-2019 Rescinds: F301 Reference: Application: All Uniform Members
EXTERNAL TRAINING		

I. Purpose

This document is designed to provide guidance on the expectations of the Department for members participating in external training programs. Additionally, it is intended to define the professional and financial responsibilities for members that participate in external training programs.

II. Background

Manchaca Fire Rescue has a long history of supporting the furtherment of our member’s professional development through training and education programs that align with the mission and business needs of the Department.

III. Policy

A. **Access to external training.** The Department will periodically advertise training classes, conferences, and programs that are available to department members. Members may also identify external courses that they wish to attend. Eligibility to attend at the Department’s expense will depend on available funding and how the class in question relates to the overall mission of the department as well as the member’s position within the organization. The Department reserves the right to limit enrolment in external training programs for reasons including, but not limited to, financial and staffing concerns. Member identified training requests may also be evaluated against alternative programs that deliver the same training.

1. **Voluntary enrolment.** Some training programs may be posted as non-mandatory professional development opportunities. Members wishing to enroll in a department advertised or member identified external training program shall do so through the Training Coordinator.
2. **Mandatory enrolment.** The Department may identify some training programs as mandatory and enroll members to attend in order to enhance the overall professional development of the organization or meet best practices for the current position held by the member.

B. **Department funding.** Funding for external training programs will be provided by the Department only if the course has been preapproved by the command staff before the start of the course/class.

1. **Expenses covered.** The Department will cover tuition and registration fees as well as purchase needed books or loan the needed book from the department library. Depending on the nature of the class, lodging, travel, mileage reimbursement, and/or a per diem stipend may be provided. In general, most one-day classes within Texas are assumed not to include travel and related expenses except for mileage reimbursement. Any associated testing or certification fees will be covered by the Department. Depending on the logistics of the situation, testing and certification fees may be paid up front by the Department or reimbursed to the member.
 2. **Expenses not covered.** Training requests that are not preapproved by the command staff will not be funded or reimbursed. Additionally, other expenses at approved training events such as membership fees, vendor or author product sales and personal expenses beyond the allotted per diem will not be covered. Members that wish to attend training at their own expense will not be reimbursed and will utilize approved PTO when class schedules conflict with their work schedule.
 - a. **Air travel.** The Department will not cover expenses for flight upgrades, preferred seating, or similar expenses. The Department will not cover bag fees beyond two checked bags.
 3. **Leave.** Members approved to attend a training event will receive training leave to attend during their shift. Members attending voluntary training will not be paid for attendance outside of their assigned shift. Members that are attending mandatory training courses will be paid for time attending the class or course outside of their assigned shift. Overtime will be paid where appropriate.
- C. **Expectations of participants.** Any members participating in an external training program are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner that reflects positively on themselves and MFR. Members are expected to abide by class rules, participate fully, attend all sessions, and follow instructor directions.
- D. **Completion of training.** Members are expected to successfully complete the training program. If the class is designed to qualify the member for a certificate or certification, the member is expected to complete all requirements and receive the certificate or certification. This would include filing any paperwork and taking any exams needed in order to receive the certificate or certification.
1. **Timely completion.** Classes and programs with a set schedule should be completed within the provided schedule. Classes and programs with open-ended or self-paced schedules should be completed within a reasonable time, not to exceed 9 months. A member may request a one-time extension of 90 days if the request is made and accepted within 30 days of the end of the 9-month period. Receiving a class certificate or obtaining a related certification for a class is considered a part of the class and is included as a part of the deadlines listed above.
- E. **Financial responsibility of the member.** The member participating in an external training program will be held financially responsible for the Department's expenses should they fail to meet the requirements set forth in this policy. The Department reserves the right to use any and all means at

its disposal to recover funds from the member. This may include, but is not limited to, measures such as an agreed payment plan or payroll deductions.

1. **Failure to meet deadline.** If the member fails to complete the class and/or receive a certificate or certification within the time periods referenced in section III.D.1, they will be held responsible for repayment of funds expended by the Department.
 2. **Failure to complete course.** The member will be held responsible for repayment of funds expended by the Department if they fail to successfully complete the class or fail to receive an applicable certificate or certification.
 3. **Retention after completion.** Should a member receive training, a certificate, or certification at the Department’s expense and then leave the organization by resignation, termination, or indefinite suspension; they will owe the Department for repayment of expenses as defined below:
 - a. **Separation within 1 year of class completion.** If a member leaves the Department within 1 year of completing a class at the Department’s expense, they will be responsible for repaying 50% of the Department’s total expenses for that training event.
 - b. **Separation within 2 years of class completion.** If a member leaves the Department within 2 years of completing a class at the Department’s expense, they will be responsible for repaying 25% of the Department’s total expenses for that training event.
- F. **Conferences.** Attendance and travel to conferences will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Members attending a conference at the Department’s expense are expected to be fully attend the conference and present documentation of attendance and/or training certificates upon their return. Failure to properly participate in a conference may incur a financial responsibility on the member for the Department’s expenses. However, section III.E.3 does not apply to conferences attended by a member of MFR.
- G. **National Fire Academy.** MFR supports and encourages participation in the training and educational programs available through the National Fire Academy. Approval to attend at the Department’s expense will be based on the applicability or the chosen course to the member’s responsibilities in the Department as well as the overall mission and goals of the Department and budgetary constraints.
1. **Application.** The NFA operates on two semesters per year with two application periods. More information is available at <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/nfa/>

First Semester	October 1 – March 31	Applications to be postmarked April 15 – June 15
Second Semester	April 1 – September 30	Application must be postmarked October 15 – December 15

Members that wish to attend the NFA should apply directly to the NFA. They will be notified of their acceptance at least 60 days before the start of that semester. The attendee will be provided information directly from the NFA regarding travel and reimbursement caps.

2. **Acceptance.** Members accepted to attend the NFA shall submit a training request form (available on the Department member's-only web site) and include a copy of the acceptance letter and a copy of the page in the welcome packet that indicates the amount to be paid for a meal ticket.
3. **Expenses.** The NFA provides a stipend directly to the attendee for one trip per year. The stipend covers the cost of the class and travel expenses. The cost of a meal ticket at the campus cafeteria will be the only expense covered by MFR. All other arrangements will be between the attendee and the NFA.