



CITY OF WATAUGA – PERSONNEL, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

POLICY TITLE	Mental Health Leave for Peace Officers and Fire Fighters
INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE	September 1, 2021
LAST REVISION DATE	This is a new policy.
POLICY NUMBER	8.08

OBJECTIVE The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in accordance with Chapter 614, Section 614.15 of the Government Code regarding mental health leave for peace officers as amended during the 87th Legislature (Senate Bill 1359). The City recognizes that the mental health of our employees is important. Therefore, the City has included all first responders in this policy. This policy provides full-time Peace Officers and Fire Fighters, who experience a traumatic event while on duty, with time away from work.

SCOPE This policy applies to Peace Officers and Fire Fighters employed by the City of Watauga as defined in this policy. Mental Health Leave for Peace Officers and Fire Fighters is intended to provide full-time Peace Officers and Fire Fighters who experience a traumatic event while on duty with time away from work to receive professional assistance in dealing with the event that was experienced. The event must have involved extreme injury, near death or death of an individual at the event to which the Peace Officer responded.

DEFINITIONS

"Peace Officer" means an individual described by Article 2.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, who is elected for, employed by, or appointed by the City.

"Fire Fighter" means a paid employee of the fire department who:

- (a) holds a position that requires substantial knowledge of fire fighting;
- (b) has met the requirements for certification by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection under Chapter 419, Government Code; and
- (b) performs a function listed in Section 143.003(4)(A) of the Local Government Code.

POLICY

- A. Mental Health Leave provides Peace Officers with up to four (4) shifts off from work in order for the Peace Officer to seek professional treatment for the handling of the traumatic event in which they were involved.

- B. Mental Health Leave provides Fire Fighters with up to two (2) shifts off from work in order for the Fire Fighters to seek professional treatment for the handling of the traumatic event in which they were involved.
- C. Mental Health Leave will be granted by the Chief of the department based upon the information provided to the department's administration after the event. The second in command may grant mental health leave, if the Chief is unavailable.
- D. The Peace Officer or Fire Fighter will contact the Chief of the department and request the use of the leave in order to obtain the mental health assistance.
- E. The Chief will consult with the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service upon granting the leave.
- F. The hours away from work will be noted on the timesheet as regular hours, to provide confidentiality; however, notes will be placed in the Peace Officer's or Fire Fighters' medical file to provide a record of the time away as well as a historical record that the leave was granted.
- G. The Director of Human Resources and Civil Service will provide necessary professional mental health information and resources to the Peace Officer or Fire Fighter.
- H. In addition to Mental Health Leave, departments will follow regular post-event protocols such as debriefing, communication with the Chaplain, etc.