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Date: August 23, 2022

Title: Attendance

Authorized By:

I. Purpose

- a. This policy aims to establish and maintain standards for employee attendance and punctuality that will ensure proper staffing of the county, provide guidelines for fair, equitable, and consistent treatment of employees, and define the application of a points-based system for attendance occurrence tracking and disciplinary action. This policy pertains to employees with non-exempt status.

II. Policy

- a. Prince George County Fire and Emergency Services can operate at optimum efficiency only when every employee understands the value of his/her position and accepts this responsibility. Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on the county and other members of the team. When employees cannot avoid being late or unable to work as scheduled, they should notify their appropriate supervisor as soon as possible before the anticipated tardiness or absence. Excessive absenteeism and tardiness are disruptive and may lead to corrective action, including possible termination of employment.
- b. This policy may not apply to employees within their first year of employment, as these members are considered probationary and subject to release from employment without cause. Employees within the first (90) ninety days of employment with more than one absence occurrence or up to three (3) occasions of tardiness during their initial ninety (90) days of employment will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

III. Definitions

- a. “eSchedule” or “scheduling software”: is the scheduling software that Prince George County Fire and EMS uses for the purposes outlined in this policy. All personnel will receive initial training on the software utilized throughout their probationary process.
- b. Attendance Points: numerical points applied to an employee’s attendance record to aid in the tracking of established thresholds.
- c. Emergency: is defined as a serious, unexpected, and potentially dangerous situation requiring immediate attention.
- d. Leaving Early: defined as leaving earlier than the assigned end of shift.



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- e. Tardy: is defined as arriving later than the scheduled start of shift without the expressed permission of the Shift Commander or scheduler.
- f. Unscheduled Absence: An employee calling out due to personal illness, an emergency, or other unplanned events. Employees must call out to the Shift Commander at least two (2) hours before the start of the shift.
- g. No Call / No Show: an absence from your scheduled shift without notification to the Shift Commander.
- h. Job Abandonment: remaining absent for two consecutive shifts without notification to the Shift Commander or leaving early from an assignment without permission.
- i. Doctor's Note: original letterhead/documentation from an employee's licensed/treating physician stating that employee 'x' was seen, treated, or excused from work for a specific date(s). This documentation must be electronically submitted to the Shift Commander immediately upon the employee's return to work—if the employee would like the applied attendance points considered for removal. A maximum of three (3) doctor's notes can be submitted for consideration of point removal per rolling calendar year. If an employee is absent for three (3) consecutive working shifts, the Shift Commander may require the employee to submit a doctor's note.
- j. Essential Personnel: any uniformed personnel assigned to Operations.

IV. Procedure

All PGFEMS Employees are expected to be present, ready, at their workstations, and engaged in their job duties at the beginning of their scheduled shift and to remain until the end unless otherwise directed.

- a. Essential personnel may be required to adjust their shifts based on significant events affecting the county. Examples would be inclement weather, mass casualty incidents, and events that span more than one operational period. Failure to do so may result in additional points and possible disciplinary action that may include termination for PGFEMS.
- b. Operations personnel are encouraged but not required to arrive 15 minutes before their scheduled shift time.
- c. To call out sick, you must speak to the on-duty Shift Commander no less than two (2) hours before the shift begins. The employee cannot leave a text or voice message; they must speak directly to the on-duty Shift Commander. Points will be assigned for a properly notified absence.



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- d. A Shift Commander may require that an employee provide a medical release for any absence due to illness. After the third consecutive day of absence, the employee may be required to obtain a Physician's release authorizing a return to full duty.
- e. An employee must notify the appropriate person for every missed shift unless a doctor's statement indicates a specific date for returning to work.
- f. If an employee will be out for an extended period, he/she must notify their Shift Commander immediately (within twenty-four (24) hours or the next business day). The employee should communicate with their Shift Commander and the scheduling department throughout the extended absence, at least weekly. The employee should contact their Shift Commander and the scheduling department three (3) days before his/her date to return to work to confirm his/her return and/or to provide appropriate physician releases if required.
- g. Any time an employee calls out for a shift, they must call their Shift Commander no later than 17:00hrs the day before their next assigned shift to update them. Again, contact the on-duty officer in command if you cannot reach your Shift Commander and notify their Shift Commander stating they will or will not be returning to work.
- h. An employee is required to notify the appropriate person for every missed shift unless approval has been granted by your Shift Commander with a doctor's note stating the date of your return.
- i. If an employee is absent for two consecutive shifts without notifying your Shift Commander or chain of command, it will be considered job abandonment, and you have voluntarily abandoned your position with Prince George County Fire and EMS; your employment will be terminated.
- j. A point system will provide guidelines for disciplinary action related to attendance and punctuality.
- k. Additional actions may also result in disciplinary action if they;
 - i. Fail to ensure their time is correct for hours worked.
 - ii. Intentionally, without cause and or approval, clock in early or stay late.
 - iii. Fail to give appropriate advance notice of an absence



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The following terms are defined to clarify the guidelines of this policy:

TERMS	DEFINITION	POINT VALUE
Scheduled Workday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any time the employee is scheduled to work includes voluntary and mandated overtime attending classes or conferences.	N/A
Absence Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failure to report for any designated shift on the work schedule after proper supervisor notification.	2 points
Leaving Work Early	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inability to complete scheduled shift after reporting for work and obtaining supervisor's approval to leave early.	½ point
Failure to ensure time record is accurate "In" or "Out"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any time an employee fails to ensure time in or out properly.Three or more occurrences within a 12-month period, of failure to ensure proper time recorded will result in 1 point per occurrence after the first three occurrences.	¼ point 1 points/occurrence
Tardy Early Shift Punch Late Shift Punch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reporting for duty one minute or more late is tardyFailure to respond and report for duty within 60 minutes of being called in is tardy unless approved in advance.	1 point
No Call/No Show	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failure by an employee to report for work at the designated time on the work schedule or failure to report to an alternate work site (i.e., training/educational seminar at or away from work) when scheduled or failure by an employee to speak directly to the authorized supervisor regarding the absence with appropriate advanced notice.However, any subsequent no call /no shows in a 12- month period will result in immediate terminationFailure to respond or refusing to report for duty when directed for emergencies.	6 points 3 points
Absent without Leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An absence of two (2) consecutive scheduled days without notifying the authorized supervisor or without an acceptable excuse.	12 points



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An employee that has two (2) consecutive absent without leave will be considered resigned without notice and will be separated from their employment after the second consecutive day of absence.The employee will be given a “no-rehire status.”	
Leaving without Authorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failure to obtain permission from the authorized supervisor to leave the work area for any reason or to leave before the end or completion of the work shift.	7 points
Leave of Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An employee absent for an unspecified time or greater than two (2) weeks may be granted a leave of absence.This type of occurrence, <u>once approved</u>, does not accumulate points and is not covered by this policy.Any points that occurred as a result of FLMA process may be considered for removal past the first occurrence.Please refer to the FMLA or LOA policy for additional guidelines.	0 points
Absence Occurrence of Work the day before or the day after approved leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A callout before or after an employee approved leave <p>NOTE: points may be waved with an approved doctor's note for absents, but no more than 3 Doctors notes in a 12-month time frame may be used.</p>	3 points
Absence Occurrence of work on day that prior leave was denied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any employee that calls out on days that prior leave was not approved will be subject to additional points.NOTE: points may be waved with an approved doctor's note for absents, but no more than two (2) Doctors notes in a 12-month time frame may be used for such incidents	4 points
Calling out on Holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Call out by any employee that is scheduled to work on county approved holidays will result in points.Additional (4) points will be added if the employee had any such days denied from prior request.	3 points
Absent from approved trade time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any employee that calls out on a shift that was approved for trade.Employees that are found to have called out on two or more shift trades in a 24-month period shall have shift trade privileges revoked for no less than 12-months.	2 points



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- l) Any employee who is tardy/absent excessively and/or repeatedly fails to ensure accuracy of their time as defined within this policy, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- m) Once time and attendance issues have been formally addressed, employees are expected to show sustained improvement. Employees who have been in the disciplinary process for more than 1 year and/or have been previously suspended for attendance issues within the previous two years will be subject to a final written warning and/or termination.
- n) Prince George Fire/EMS provides for the community of Prince George. This requires our Fire/EMS agency to respond to emergencies in all weather and/or conditions. It is essential for employees to be aware of potential inclement weather and natural or man-made disasters. A weather emergency does not constitute an excuse for not being present at work or reporting in. Employees must make provisions to arrive at work; whether that means arriving early for work or requiring lodging post tour of work. Employees are encouraged to communicate with the on-duty supervisor their intentions to arrive at work.
- o) During an unforeseen, overwhelming disaster, PGFEMS leadership may recall Full-Time Exempt and Non-Exempt Employees to work. This decision will not be made lightly and will only come as a directive from the Chief of PGFEMS based on input from all available parties.
- p) The Personal Records Change Policy applies to all employees for whom the Human Resources Department maintains personal data on file. Each employee is responsible for keeping his/her personal data current at all times. The employee holds the responsibility for updating data and paper files upon receipt of new information. The departmental HR representative will add the new information to the departmental file and will forward a status change form to Human Resources reflecting any changes as needed.
- q) Disciplinary Actions will be issued to the employee when the low threshold occurs. Disciplinary Actions related to this policy do not need to be 'stepped' in the process (i.e., if the employee has one tardy and two unscheduled absences consecutively earning eight attendance points, they would receive the written warning, not the verbal counsel). Disciplinary Action thresholds for attendance point accrual will be as follows:



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Point	Disciplinary Action
5 accumulated points	Verbal Counsel
7 – 7.5 points within a rolling 12-months	Written Counsel
9.0 – 9.5 points within a rolling 12-months	Final Written Counseling with Suspension
12 or more points within a rolling 12-month	Termination

- r) Shift Commanders are responsible for the consistent enforcement of this policy. An employee may appeal the assignment of points through their chain of command to the Fire Chief. The Chief of Fire and Emergency Services and the Human Resources Director will determine whether to rescind points.
- s) This established point system provides a guideline to facilitate the management of employee attendance. PGFEMS reserves the right to discipline an employee for patterns of poor attendance at any time and for any reason.

V. Exceptions to Attendance Points

- a. Time missed resulting from qualifying events under the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and/or other applicable laws.
- b. Time missed resulting from an on-the-job injury.
- c. Time missed resulting from Bereavement Leave due to a death in the immediate family as defined in County Policy.
- d. Time missed resulting from a summons for jury, or witness duty.
- e. Time missed due to Military Leave.
- f. Time missed due to approved Personal Leave.
- g. Tardiness resulting from Voting. This must be pre-arranged with your Shift Commander.
- h. Occurrences deemed appropriate by Prince George County Fire and EMS Command staff.



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VI. Discretion

Prince George County Fire and EMS Command staff reserves the right to review and adjust the application or dismissal of points on a case-by-case basis. Considerations may include the employee's attendance record, and any disciplinary action related to attendance.