

Niskayuna Fire District #1 Career Division Benefits and Compensation

(Employment Agreement Period 01/01/2004 – 12/31/2008)

A. Introduction

1. Benefits and Compensation Programs

This document presents the highlights of the benefits/compensation programs for the employees of the Career Division. The legal agreements that underlay these programs can be found in the past letters of agreement between the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Niskayuna Permanent Firefighters Association (NPFA).

2. Entry Requirements

Candidates for employment must meet basic civil service requirements. They must hold either a high school diploma or equivalent and be able to pass a medical exam to criteria approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners. That criteria includes but is not limited to passing specified hearing, eyesight and drug tests.

Candidates must possess a valid NYS drivers license, complete a civil service application for employment, and pass a civil service test. Conviction of arson in any degree shall be an automatic disqualification from employment at Niskayuna Fire District #1.

The Board of Fire Commissioners appoints career division employees under civil service law. They must be NYS certified paramedics according to State Department of Health part 800, chapter VI of the New York State Emergency Medical Service Code. The Board may give preference in hiring to residents of the Town of Niskayuna. Other civil service requirements may also apply.

New employees must complete probationary firefighter training and complete a probationary period of up to 26 weeks (per Civil Service Rules)

3. Fire district #1 Rules and Regulations.

Career division employees are expected to abide by current District #1 Rules and Regulations. All employees report to the Chief – Career Division for scheduling of activities and day-to-day work assignments. They shall discuss with him any needed changes as well as disputes.

4. Standard Operating Procedures and Running Orders.

Binders containing the district's standard operating procedures and running orders are maintained in the Chief's office as well as at the control consoles in both stations. From time to time, the Chief – Career Division may prepare new procedures or update existing procedures. All employees are expected to know and follow these directives.

B. Compensation

The purpose of this section is to explain Niskayuna Fire District #1's current compensation rate structure, the step progression system, the salary adders that are available to employees, the department's policies on overtime and uniform allowances.

1. Compensation Rates and Work Schedules

Compensation rates are established for the following job titles:

- (1) Starting Firefighter/Paramedic
- (2) First Grade Firefighter/Paramedic
- (3) Lieutenant/Paramedic
- (4) Captain/Paramedic

The negotiated pay rates for the contract period of 1/1/2004 through 12/31/2008 are as follows:

Job Title	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Starting Firefighter/Paramedic	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000
First Grade Firefighter/Paramedic	\$53,103.86	\$54,696.98	\$56,337.89	\$58,028.02	\$59,768.86
Lieutenant/Paramedic	\$55,730.75	\$57,402.67	\$59,124.75	\$60,898.49	\$62,725.44
Captain/Paramedic	\$59,053.52	\$60,825.13	\$62,649.88	\$64,529.38	\$66,465.26

The current agreement is as follows: In 2004, the pay scales will be increased by .5% over 2003 rates. The rates above represent a 3% per year increase effective January 1st of each year for the next 4 years (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008). A new contract will be negotiated prior to 1/1/2009 and take effect at that time.

The 28-day work period is the official time period the district uses in determining pay schedules. All career employees work an average of 40 hours per week on schedules that are established by the Chief-Career Division and provided to each employee by November 15 for the following year. All employees work 24-hour shifts except for the Chief-Career Division and two Firefighter/Paramedics who work a daytime shift Monday through Fridays, which shall be established by the Chief-Career Division. Overtime is paid at a rate of 1 and ½ times the normal hourly rate for all hours above regularly scheduled hours. (Regularly scheduled hours average 40 hours per week.)

2. Step Progression System

Newly hired Firefighter/Paramedics progress to the pay level of 1st Grade Firefighter/Paramedic in five yearly steps as follows, with each step beginning on the anniversary of their Continuous Service Date (CSD). Firefighters reach 1st Grade Firefighter after six continuous years of service according to the following schedule:

First Year – Current negotiated starting pay

End of 1st year - \$10,000 below current First Grade Firefighter/Paramedic pay rate

End of 2nd year – additional 1/5 the difference between current pay and current First Grade pay rate

End of 3rd year – additional 1/4 the difference between current pay and current First Grade pay rate

End of 4th year – additional 1/3 the difference between current pay and current First Grade pay rate

End of 5th year – additional 1/2 the difference between current pay and current First Grade pay rate

End of 6th year – Current First Grade Firefighter/Paramedic pay rate

Should a Firefighter/Paramedic discontinue his or her employment within the first 3 years after successful completion of the Basic Firefighters Training Program, he or she is responsible to reimburse the District for training costs according to the following schedule: (Tuition, room and board is considered training costs for the purposes of this section.)

If employment ends during their 1st year – 70% of training costs

If employment ends during their 2nd year – 40% of training costs

If employment ends during their 3rd year – 20% of training costs

After three continuous years of service there is no required re-imburement of training costs.

3. Salary Adders

This section addresses additional compensation above base pay rates.

Paramedic Re-certification Stipend: All Career Firefighter/Paramedics are paid a stipend of \$2,600 each time they complete NYS Paramedic Re-certification. This is currently required every three years. This stipend is in lieu of overtime pay for the hours spent on Continuing Education required to maintain certification with New York State.

College Degree Adder: Employees who have successfully completed an associates or bachelors degree in fire protection, emergency medical services, emergency management, or other Fire/EMS related field shall receive additional compensation of \$500.00 per year in addition to their base salary.

4. Overtime

As of March 1986, Federal Wage and Hours Laws prohibit Career Firefighter/Paramedics from volunteering their services at drills or emergency calls in this Fire District without compensation. Career employees who participate at emergencies or approved training will be compensated for their time.

Overtime is paid for hours worked above regularly scheduled hours at the rate of time and a half of the base pay. Overtime hours must be submitted by voucher to the Chief-Career Division.

EMS Instructor Certifications –Employees completing certification as Course Instructor Coordinators, Certified Lab Instructors, ACLS Instructors, CPR Instructors, or other instructional certifications deemed necessary by the Chief-Career Division, shall be compensated for the hours required to obtain and maintain current certification status.

5. Uniform Allowance

At the time of appointment, a new employee is furnished a dress uniform blouse, pants, dress hat, tie, dress shirt, six pairs of socks, one pair of shoes, four sets of work uniforms with appropriate badges and insignias. Each year, employees receive a uniform allowance credit of \$170 to replace worn, damaged or destroyed uniforms and athletic gear components. The Chief – Career Division tracks the usage of this allowance credit.

C. Insurance

Niskayuna Fire District #1 provides Medical and Life Insurance coverage to the Career Division employees. This section addresses the coverage provided to current Career Employees as well as retirees. The present insurance program has three parts: Medical, Life, and Workers Compensation benefits.

1. Family Medical Insurance

Niskayuna Fire District #1 provides all current employees and retirees hired before 1/1/04 with full family coverage for Hospital, Medical-surgical, Extended Medical Benefits, and a prescription drug program through MVP at no cost to the employee.

Employees are responsible to make the \$20 co-pay for office visits. The District reimburses all employees for their prescription co-pay costs except for \$1.00 per prescription. A prescription re-imbusement form is provided for employees to submit receipts for payment to the district on a quarterly basis.

Documentation detailing current coverage and exclusions shall be provided to employees as they are received from the insurance companies.

Employees hired after 01/01/2004 must contribute to their medical insurance coverage according to the chart below. These new hires will pay 30% of Health care premiums during their 1st year, stepping down to 0% over the 1st 10 years of career. The steps will be equal steps amounting to 3% per year. After 10 years, the Fire District will pay 100% of their Family Medical Insurance Premiums for the remainder of their career and retirement.

Medical Insurance Contributions

Year of Employment	Percentage of Medical Ins. Premiums
1 st year	30%
2 nd year	27%
3 rd year	24%
4 th year	21%
5 th year	18%
6 th year	15%
7 th year	12%
8 th year	9%
9 th year	6%
10 th year	3%
11 th year and beyond	No contribution to Medical Insurance

The Fire District maintains a Section 125 Flexible Spending Account for all employees. This shall be effective upon the hiring of the first new employee after January 1, 2004.

Negotiations re-opener clause – In the event of an increase in the cost of medical insurance coverage to the district of 45% over the 2004 rates, negotiations may be re-opened by either party. Re-opened negotiations shall be limited to medical coverage and salary adjustment.

The District shall provide retirees with medical and dental insurance coverage at least equivalent to the retiree's benefits at the time of their retirement. This remains in effect for the employees or retirees lifetime.

2. Dental Insurance

Niskayuna Fire District #1 provides Blue Cross/Blue Shield, a Matrix Four Dental Program to each employee, retiree and his or her family, including students up to age 25.

3. Life Insurance

Life insurance coverage for a career division employee is provided in two different ways at no cost to the employee.

The NYS Retirement System Fund compensates the beneficiaries of a firefighter who loses his or her life while performing assigned duties. More information is available through the NYS Police/Firefighters Retirement System. The payments into this Fund which Fire District #1 makes periodically for pension purposes provides the insurance coverage.

In addition, a \$10,000 life insurance policy is in force on each Career Division employee. This is a group policy that covers employees with premiums paid by Niskayuna Fire District #1. The employee designates the beneficiary of this policy.

4. Workers Compensation

All employees are covered by Workers Compensation Insurance to insure loss of wages and cost for medical treatments incurred for injuries or illnesses that are job related. See section D part 4, for more information on this benefit.

D. Time Off

1. Vacations

All Career personnel are entitled to annual paid vacation days after one year of service. These days are earned during each year of service to be utilized the following year. The vacation days are allotted as follows:

After 1 year of employment	(2) 24 hour shifts or (6) 8 hour shifts
After 2 years of employment	(4) 24 hour days or (12) 8 hour shifts
After 3 years of employment	(6) 24 hour shifts or (18) 8 hour shifts

Officers are entitled to one additional 24-hour vacation day per year.

Vacation days must be taken in the current calendar year, between January 1 and December 31 and cannot be banked or carried over into other years.

The Chief-Career Division administers the scheduling of vacation days.

2. Holidays

Members of the Career Division are entitled to three 24-hour shifts off each year in lieu of holidays. These days off are scheduled in the same way as vacation days, under the administration of the Chief-Career Division.

The day-shift firefighters (firefighters who work a 5 day work week, Monday through Friday) have the following days off as paid holidays:

1. New Years Day
2. Presidents' Day
3. Memorial Day
4. Independence Day
5. Labor Day
6. Election Day
7. Thanksgiving Day
8. Day after Thanksgiving
9. Christmas Eve
10. Christmas Day

10 Holidays will be granted taking into consideration the current Holiday schedule followed by General Electric Research and Development Center.

3. Sick Leave

When a member of the Career Division requires sick leave, he or she is permitted a maximum of three 24-hour days in a twelve month period. This twelve-month period will begin on the individual's 1st illness absence day. Usage of these sick days does not require any documentation from a doctor.

In the event of an extended illness under a doctor's care, the Board of Fire Commissioners may grant additional sick leave. The degree of illness may first be evaluated and reported by the patient's physician along with an estimate of how long the employee will be absent. The Board will weigh this information along with the employee's seniority, dedication to duty, prior illness absence record, and past practices in arriving at a decision.

While on sick leave members of the Career Division are expected to keep in contact with the Shift Officer or Chief-Career Division. When reporting back for active duty, the individual will submit a doctor's statement to the Chief-Career Division that he or she is qualified to resume active firefighting duty.

4. Sick Leave caused by Job-Related injury or sickness

When a job-related injury or illness causes a member of the Career Division to require sick leave, the Board of Commissioners may require an independent medical exam. In these cases, a report will be provided to the Chief-Career Division. The Chief-Career Division will see that the proper Workers Compensation Insurance and other NY State forms are filled out and submitted.

Since expenses incurred as a result of job-related injuries and illnesses are covered by Workers Compensation benefits and Municipal Law, any benefit payments will accrue to the Fire District for any amounts up to the amount of salary which the Board of Fire Commissioners has approved salary continuance.

5. Time off for a Death in the Family

Members of the Career Division are entitled to five calendar days Bereavement Leave, with full pay, in case of the death of wife, husband, child, father, mother, siblings, father-in-law, mother-in-law, or grandparents.

6. Personal Leave

Members of the Career Division are allowed up to 24 hours per year of personal leave to be taken in not less than two-hour increments. Employees shall notify the Duty Officer at time of request of the need for personal time coverage. The Duty Officer will grant the personal time request once appropriate staffing coverage is arranged. If coverage is not available, Personal Leave may not be granted.

7. Compensatory Time Off

In lieu of overtime compensation, employees may bank actual overtime hours worked on an hour for hour basis as compensatory time off. Compensatory time off may be taken at the employee's convenience, pending the arrangement of appropriate staffing coverage by the duty officer. Upon employee request, compensatory time banked will be paid out to the employee at the employee's overtime rate. Compensatory time banked (in excess of 24 hours) and not used by December 1st of the current calendar year will be paid out to the employee at the employee's overtime rate. Employees will have the option of carrying over to the next calendar year, a maximum of 24 hours. Any overtime hours turned in for pay will be paid at the hourly rate applicable at the time the hours were worked.

8. Hour Reduction Days

Each member of the Career Division is entitled to four 24-hour days off per year in lieu of lunch and dinner breaks. These Hour Reduction Days are to be scheduled at the time each employee files his or her Vacation days for the coming year and utilized within the same calendar year. Usage of these Hour Reduction Days requires that other employees be utilized to fill these vacancies. The firefighters covering for Hour Reduction Days will be paid at the normal overtime rate.

If an employee notifies the Chief that he or she does not wish to utilize his or her hour reduction days, the employee will be compensated for those days at their straight time rate for those four 24-hour shifts. Hour reduction days cannot be banked or carried over into the next year. Unused hour reduction days are cancelled.

E. Physical Fitness

1. Exercise Facilities and Equipment

Niskayuna Fire District #1 provides fitness opportunities to members of its Career Division. All NPFA members are required to participate in a physical fitness program.

2. Athletic Gear

Career personnel are supplied with sweat suits and t-shirts. They are also provided with athletic footwear. All employees are required to have an annual physical examination.

3. Periodic Medical Evaluations

Members of the Career Division are required to have a yearly medical evaluation to comply with OSHA standards. This will be done at the expense of Fire District #1 at a facility approved by the Board of Commissioners and scheduled by the Chief-Career Division.

4. F. Tuition Reimbursement

1. College Degree Programs

Schenectady Community College's two-year Fire Protection degree program is available to Career Division personnel. The Fire District will provide overtime coverage to allow on-duty personnel to attend New York State and local college Fire and Paramedic courses. This overtime cannot exceed four hours on any duty shift, and coverage will only be provided for one person per shift.

For career personnel already possessing a college degree or college credits other than the Schenectady Community College's two-year Fire Protection degree program reimbursed by the Fire District, enrollment in the Empire State Center for Distance Learning is an option. The Fire District will provide reimbursement for the first 64 credit hours taken through the Center for Distance Learning in the pursuit of a Fire Science or Emergency Services degree.

An annual fund of \$1,500 is available to pay for courses beyond the degrees noted above. Each career firefighter is offered a yearly increment of two 4-hour courses of study in order of rank, followed by seniority.

The Fire District reimburses educational costs as described above under the following conditions: One hundred percent of the cost is reimbursed for a course with a grade of B or higher; fifty percent for a C (below C, No reimbursement).

2. Paramedic Recertification

All Fire District #1 career personnel must be certified NYS Paramedics at the time of appointment and maintain certification as a condition of employment. Niskayuna Fire District #1 provides a \$2,600 stipend to every employee each time they recertify. This stipend is in lieu of hourly overtime pay for the classes and testing required by New York State and REMO to maintain Paramedic Certification.

Two consecutive courses will be allowed following expiration of current certification. Additional courses may be granted at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners. New York State requires re-certification every three years.

3. Other Educational Payments

Occasionally career division members are asked or required to attend school or take courses outside the capitol region. An example would be attendance at the NYS Fire Academy in Montour Falls. With prior Board approval, the District pays all necessary tuition, room and board costs. If a District vehicle cannot be made available for travel, use of a personal vehicle will be reimbursed at the current Federal rate per mile.

G. Retirement Benefits

Every member of the Career Division is enrolled in the New York State Police and Fire Retirement System. More information is available from the New York State Retirement System's website at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/>. The phone number is 474-7736.

1. Retirement Membership Tiers

Employees who were hired before July 31, 1973 are in Tier 1. All Employees hired after July 31, 1973 are in Tier 2. More information is available on the website or by calling the office.

2. Benefits Provided

a. Retirement Plan

District #1 Career Division employees are enrolled in the 20-year (non-contributory) Plan 384E. This plan, adopted in 1996, offers retirement after 20 years with ½ pay. It allows for an additional 1/60th of FAS for each year completed above and beyond 20 years. This plan requires members to be separated from service by age 62. The maximum benefit for Tier 2 employees is 66% of FAS.

In 2004, the Board agreed to adopt option 443f for all current and future employees. This option allows for retirement calculations to be based on either an employee's highest consecutive 36 months of service or based on the final 12 months of an employee's career (whichever calculation gives the highest benefit).

b. Accidental and Ordinary Disability Benefits

Two types of disability benefits are available to members.

1. Accidental Disability Benefits: where a member has been permanently disabled for the performance of his or her duties as the direct result of an on the job accident not caused by the members own negligence.
2. Ordinary Disability Benefits: where a member has been physically or mentally disabled for the performance of his or her duties.

The detailed criteria and formula for types of benefits can be obtained from the Retirement System's Albany office as well as application forms. Tier 1 and Tier 2 members can file simultaneously for accidental disability, normal disability, and service retirement (the Retirement System makes the decision as to which type of disability will be allowed).

c. Ordinary Death and Accidental Death Benefits

Ordinary Death Benefits are applicable when the member dies while in public service or while on authorized medical leave without pay, having completed one or more years of service since last joining the Retirement System. Accidental Death Benefits are applicable when the member dies before retirement as a direct result of an accident while on duty. The detailed benefit formulae as well as application forms can be obtained from the Retirement System's Albany office.

3. Continuation of Medical Benefits after Retirement

The Board of Fire Commissioners agreed in 2004 to provide all retirees with medical insurance coverage at least equivalent to the retiree's benefits at the time of retirement.

4. Social Security

All employees are covered by Social Security.