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# Nepotism and Conflicting Relationships

## 1042.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure equal opportunity and effective employment practices by avoiding actual or perceived favoritism, discrimination or actual or potential conflicts of interest by or between members of this district. These employment practices include: recruiting, testing, hiring, compensation, assignment, promotion, use of facilities, access to training opportunities, supervision, performance appraisal, discipline and workplace safety and security.

### 1042.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

**Business relationship** - Serving as an employee, independent contractor, compensated consultant, owner, board member, shareholder or investor in an outside business, company, partnership, corporation, venture or other transaction, where the employee's annual interest, compensation, investment or obligation is greater than \$250.

**Conflict of interest** - Any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest in which it reasonably appears that an employee's action, inaction or decisions are or may be influenced by the employee's personal or business relationship.

**Nepotism** - The practice of showing favoritism to relatives over others in appointment, employment, promotion or advancement by any public official in a position to influence these personnel decisions.

**Personal relationship** - Includes marriage, cohabitation, dating or any other intimate relationship beyond mere friendship.

**Public official** - A supervisor, officer or employee vested with authority by law, rule or regulation or to whom authority has been delegated.

**Relative** - An employee's parent, stepparent, spouse, domestic partner, significant other, child (natural, adopted or step), sibling or grandparent.

**Subordinate** - An employee who is subject to the temporary or ongoing direct or indirect authority of a supervisor.

**Supervisor** - An employee who has temporary or ongoing direct or indirect authority over the actions, decisions, evaluation and/or performance of a subordinate employee.

## 1042.2 POLICY

The Blue Ridge Fire District is committed to fair and equitable treatment of all members and to creating a work atmosphere that is free of both actual and apparent conflicts of interest that could compromise this principle.

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### **1042.3 RESTRICTED DUTIES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The District will not prohibit all personal or business relationships between employees. However, in order to avoid nepotism or other inappropriate conflicts, the following reasonable restrictions should apply:

- (a) Employees are prohibited from directly supervising, occupying a position in the line of supervision or being directly supervised by any other employee who is a relative or with whom they are involved in a personal or business relationship.
  - 1. If circumstances require that such a supervisor/subordinate relationship exist temporarily, the supervisor should make every reasonable effort to defer matters pertaining to the involved employee to an uninvolved supervisor.
  - 2. When personnel and circumstances permit, the District will attempt to make every reasonable effort to avoid placing such employees in supervisor/subordinate situations. The District, however, reserves the right to transfer or reassign any employee to another position within the same classification in order to avoid conflicts with any provision of this policy.
- (b) Employees are prohibited from participating in, contributing to or recommending promotions, assignments, performance evaluations, transfers or other personnel decisions affecting an employee who is a relative or with whom they are involved in a personal or business relationship.
- (c) Whenever possible, trainers should not be assigned to train relatives. Trainers are prohibited from entering into or maintaining personal or business relationships with any member they are assigned to train until such time as the training has been successfully completed and, if an employee, off probation.
- (d) To avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, members of this district should refrain from developing or maintaining personal or financial relationships with victims, witnesses or other individuals during the course of or as a direct result of any official contact.
- (e) Except as required in the performance of official duties, or in the case of immediate relatives, employees should not develop or maintain personal or financial relationships with any individual they know or reasonably should know is under criminal investigation, is a convicted felon, parolee, fugitive, registered sex or arson offender, or who engages in serious violations of state or federal laws.

#### **1042.3.1 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY**

Prior to entering into any personal or business relationship, or other circumstance which the employee knows or reasonably should know could create a conflict of interest or other violation of this policy, the employee should promptly notify his/her uninvolved, next highest level of supervisor.

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Whenever any employee is placed in circumstances that would require the employee to take enforcement action or provide official information or services to any relative or individual with whom the employee is involved in a personal or business relationship, the employee should promptly notify his/her uninvolved, immediate supervisor. In the event that no uninvolved supervisor is immediately available, the employee should promptly notify the Fire Chief to have another uninvolved employee either relieve the involved employee or, minimally, remain present to witness the action.

### 1042.3.2 SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

Upon being notified of, or otherwise becoming aware of any circumstance that could result in or constitute an actual or potential violation of this policy, a supervisor should take all reasonable steps to promptly mitigate or avoid such violations whenever possible.

Supervisors should also promptly notify the Fire Chief of such actual or potential violations through the chain of command.