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Fire and Emergency New Zealand
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23 June 2023

[REDACTED]

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Information Request – Meal Allowances

I refer to your official information request dated 14 June 2023 asking for the following information.

Fire and Emergency NZ's policy/procedure regarding the payment of meal allowances to personnel, and specifically detailing in what circumstances these allowances are paid, what amounts are paid depending on the situation, do the payments differ for different types of personnel (i.e. corporate, career, volunteer, etc.), when the amounts paid were last changed or reviewed, and what factors influenced the several most recent changes (if any) to these rates during those reviews.

Our Sensitive Expenditure Policy provides that meals whilst travelling or working off-site to be a person expense unless it falls within one of the below policies or criteria. Our policies do not differentiate between types of personnel, rather it is the circumstances in which the expenditure is incurred that will determine what policy is applicable and what rates apply. Below are details of the different policies, including the circumstances they apply to, rates payable and details of their latest update/review.

Training course policy:

This policy applies to the following personnel when they are required to attend, deliver, or coordinate a course run by national training:

- Fire and Emergency personnel who are attending courses including:
 - Students and trainers or operational career personnel

- Operational managers
- Volunteer trainees
- Training Delivery managers
- Training Business Services
- Deputy Chief Executive People

The rates set out in this policy are:

Breakfast – \$20.71
 Lunch – \$15.53
 Dinner – \$36.24
 Total – \$72.48

The rates provided in this policy came from the previous collective employment agreement with the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union, and they have not been updated since November 2019.

Travel and accommodation policy:

Under this policy personnel are entitled to up to three reasonable meals for each full day (24 hours) of travel requiring an overnight stay, unless covered by an employment agreement or Training Course policy. The rates provided under this policy are provided by the meal, private stay and mileage rates schedule. The maximum amount personnel can charge to their purchase card or claim for reimbursement for any single meal is:

Breakfast – \$28
 Lunch – \$20
 Dinner – \$50
 Total – \$98

The Policy further provides:

- Personnel are entitled up to two reasonable meals for each full day of travel that does not require an overnight stay.
- Personnel cannot claim for a meal where that meal has been otherwise provided, e.g., by conference or meeting catering.
- Morning tea and afternoon tea costs, including coffee or other hot drinks, are a personal expense.
- Where more than one Fire and Emergency employee is present at a meal, one person can pay for the table. They must record details of each diner (name and business unit) on the receipt and enter these into our internal system.
- Where one Fire and Emergency employee is travelling and chooses to dine with (a) locally based Fire and Emergency employee(s), even if it is to have an early morning or late evening meeting, Fire and Emergency will only cover the cost of the meal for the travelling employee.
- Where there is an expectation that you will attend a meeting, dinner or other event outside of work hours, including in the area you reside in, Fire and Emergency will cover the costs. Expenditure must be in line with the meal allowances outlined in the Meal, Private stay and mileage rates schedule.

In May 2023 we reviewed the rates and updated the rates for breakfast and lunch. When making the decision to update some of the rates we took into account advice from the Office of Auditor-General about sensitive expenditure and the approach taken by other government agencies.

Contractual Arrangements:

Payment or reimbursement for meals under the collective employment agreements with the Public Service Association and Fire Emergency Commanders Association rely on the policies above.

There is a provision in the Collective agreement with the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) where the negotiated amount is payable. Under this agreement where a firefighter is employed for one hour or more immediately before normal time for commencing shift or one hour or more immediately following normal time for ceasing duty, they shall be supplied with a hot meal by the employer or in lieu thereof paid a meal allowance at the rates below.

Rates as negotiated with NZPFU:

- 1 July 2021 - \$17.17
- 1 July 2022 - \$18.03
- 1 July 2023 - \$18.93

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Note also that this response (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Fire and Emergency website.

Nāku noa nā



Julia McCook-Weir
Manager, Information Requests

