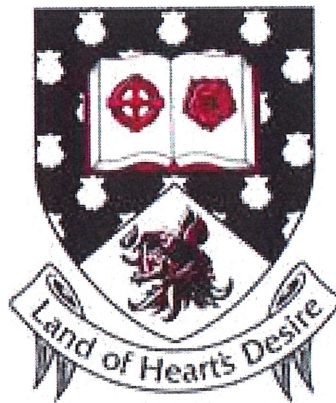




SLIGO FIRE SERVICES
POLICY DOCUMENT
FIRE CHARGES, WAIVERS & WRITE-OFF'S
AUGUST 2021



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1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the policy involved in the issuing of Fire Service Charges and the Write Off and Waiver of Fire Service Charges. This document is relevant to all personnel involved in the recording, input, calculation, approval and processing of fire service charges, and preparation and approval of write offs and waiver of fire service charges.

This policy document does not preclude Senior Management from dealing with individual incidents on a case-by-case basis, where said incident falls outside the scope of this policy document.

2.0 NON INVOICED INCIDENTS

It is the policy of Sligo Fire Service that invoices will not issue in the following circumstances:

- Incidents where a fatality has occurred
- Incidents involving self harm or attempted suicide
- Incident where the beneficiary of the service cannot be determined
- Fallen Trees on Public Roads
- Where Assistance is provided to the Garda
- Where Assistance is provided to the Ambulance Service
- Oil Spillage on Public Roads where the responsible person cannot be identified
- Where humanitarian grounds have been identified and approved by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO)
- Flooding on land or buildings where the water originated from the public road.
- Incidents attended to on behalf of Roads Section
- Incidents where the property is owned by Sligo County Council
- Where indicated on the Fire Report that the owner is an OAP and that there is no insurance cover in place
- Charitable Organisations dependant on condition as per 3.3

3.0 INVOICING

On a daily basis the Assistant Staff Officer prints the fire reports, reviews, takes note of the observations recorded, checks the timings, and when all the required data has been sourced e.g. car/property owners identified, exact location agreed, who should be billed, a draft invoice amount is calculated. The Staff Officer will check calculations of amount.

The Draft invoice amount are referred to SACFO/CFO for approval, who will check closing down times, fire-fighter meals duration, nature of incident and compare actual costs etc as required.

The Assistant Staff Officer creates the Invoices on Agresso once approved by the SACFO /Chief Fire Officer and issues to the debtor.

Details on payment methods and a Waiver Form is attached with each invoice.

If a reduction has been applied to an invoice, detail of same shall be included on the invoice.

Stamp all Invoices with the "Insurance Companies" stamp and all RTC Invoices with the "Costs from other Areas of Sligo Co Co" stamp

Note the issue of invoices is reliant on reports being uploaded by Station Officers after an incident, determination of ownership details etc. In relation to incidents, involving motor vehicles the name and address of the registered owners of the vehicles will have to be requested from the Motor Tax Department using document S103.

Where a third party is subsequently identified as the owner of a property and not the person as named on the invoice, a credit note is issued and a new invoice issued to the verified property owner.

3.1 Further Correspondence

Payment reminders are issued following the issue of the original invoice. The current schedule of reminders are as follows:-

- Reminder Letter 1 - issues 2 weeks after the Invoice has been issued.
- Reminder letter 2 - issues 2 weeks after letter 1
- Reminder letter 3 - (final warning) issues 2 weeks after letter 2

All fire Debtors are tracked on the Ascendas System. This system records details of any correspondence with Debtors, Solicitors, Insurance Companies etc - all actions are documented and all correspondence is scanned and uploaded by the Admin Staff.

Queries in the first instance are dealt with by the Clerical Officer, Assistant Staff Officer and Staff Officer and when required escalated to the Senior Officers for decision. The Debtor is informed of the decision in writing and Ascendas updated.

Insurance companies are advised that the Fire Service are not responsible for investigating who is responsible for a road traffic collision, the costs incurred are divided evenly between persons involved. The Debtor is advised to forward their invoice onto their Insurance Company and they will pursue the other Insurance Company for the costs incurred. However, Debtors are advised that reminders will still be issued to them if payment has not been received.

If after reminder letter 3 no payment has been received Finance Section will refer the debtor account to

- (i) Revenue Collection team who may visit with you to arrange payment and /or
- (ii) A debt collection agent

3.2 Road Traffic Collisions

Where road traffic collision are attended by more than one brigade an invoice will issue based on the times attended by each Fire Brigade Station per hour and part there off.

In the case of incidents involving multi-vehicle RTC's, invoices will be divided evenly between all parties.

3.3 Registered Charities

The Chief Fire Officer and Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer will make recommendation with regard to the invoicing of the various registered Charities on a case by case basis taking into consideration some or all of the following:-

- Service provided by the Charity
- Insurance cover by the Charity
- Extent of the Emergency Call out
- Possible Cause of the Incident
- Compliance by the Charity/Owner/Occupier with Fire Safety Legislation/Best Practice
- Any other consideration of relevance

The Assistant Staff Officer acts on Senior Officer's Instructions with regard to the issuing/calculation of invoices where the amount to be charged is in question.

3.4 Other Counties

For attendance at incidents in adjoining Counties Roscommon, Leitrim, Mayo and Donegal an invoice is issued for the full cost of attendance by Sligo Fire Services plus 10.95% PRSI and 30% administration charge.

3.5 Copies of Fire Reports

Fire Reports are printed from the FSI System and are issued to Insurance Companies, Solicitors etc for a fee of €100. Fire Fighters names and Caller Details are redacted from the documents.

4.0 PAYMENT OPTIONS, WAIVERS SCHEME, WRITE OFF RECOMMENDATIONS TO HEAD OF FINANCE & REFERRAL TO DEBT COLLECTION AGENCY

4.1 Payment Options

- **By Post** – Cheques, Bank Drafts or Postal Orders should be made payable to Sligo County Council and forwarded to Finance Department, Sligo County Council, County Hall, Riverside, Sligo. It is important that the Name, Address and Customer Account No. are clearly stated with all Cheques, Bank Drafts or Postal Orders.
- **In person** at any Sligo County Council office or at Sligo Fire Service Office
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Pay Online www.sligococo.ie/Payments/
 1. Enter your Customer ID
 2. Enter the **first** letter of your **first Name** and the **last** letter of your **Surname**
- **By Debit Card** – Please contact the Finance Department at 071-9111305/9111304 or alternatively contact Fire Service at 071-9111413/9111404/9111403
- **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) / Bank Credit Transfer** – this must be arranged with your bank directly. Bank Details:
Bank of Ireland, Stephen Street, Sligo
IBAN: IE16BOFI90544018581472
IBIC: BOFIE2D
- **Standing Order** – Weekly, fortnightly or monthly. Standing Order Forms are sent out with all invoices and 1st reminder letters. Contact any of the administration Staff in the Fire Service Department in advance to agree the Standing Order amount. The completed form must be submitted by you to your bank.
- **Payment Plan** - Payment of the invoice can be facilitated in instalments. A Debtor can contact the Fire Service Office, outlining their circumstances and it will be examined, taking the following factors into account:
 - Personal circumstances
 - Ability to pay
 - Amount of charges

In general, a payment plan can be designed to ensure that the Invoice is paid off as early as possible and in a timeframe that the Debtor can reasonably achieve.

4.2 Waiver Scheme

Sligo County Council has a waiver scheme in place. Completed Waiver Application Forms are sent to Sligo Fire Services, St Anne's Place, Sligo. The Staff Officer will process the application and advise the applicant in writing if they are entitled to a waiver in part or full. A Waiver form is attached with each invoice with the income details listed below included.

This Form can also be downloaded on Sligo County Council's website

www.sligococo.ie/Services/FireService/FireBrigadeCharges

Waiver Scheme Income Brackets (Weekly) Single Income

Minimum Income Level	Maximum Income Level	Discount Allowance
Nil	€240.00	100%
€240.01	€440.00	50%
€440.01	Over	NIL

Waiver Scheme Income Brackets (Weekly) 2+ person Household Income

Minimum Income Level	Maximum Income Level	Discount Allowance
Nil	€440	100%
€440.01	€840	50%
€840.01	Over	NIL

Waiver Scheme Allowance Per Household

Per Household Member	Maximum Discount
Dependent Adult	€20.00
Children	€15.00 (Per Child for First Four Children)
Children	€20.00 (Per Additional Child)

Single Applicant in receipt of Old Age Pension - 100% Waiver

Note:

1. Where a Waiver is sought for a Chimney Fire, only one Waiver application will be considered by Sligo Fire Service for each individual. Further applications for a chimney fire submitted by the same applicant for the same address will not be considered.
2. An application for a reduction of a fire service charge will only be entertained for the amount of the charge or for part of charge that is not recoverable from an insurance company or from any other source.

4.3 Settlements

From time to time a Debtor may make an offer to settle their account. The offer is considered by the Chief Fire Officer and they will make their recommendation having taken all circumstances into account.

4.4 Credit adjustment

Credit Adjustments are made by the Assistant Staff Officer where necessary to correct an account on the recommendation of the Chief Fire Officer or Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

4.5 Write off's - Recommendations to The Head of Finance

Write Off's are investigated on a case by case basis and where applicable are recommended by the Chief Fire Officer/Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer to the Head of Finance for approval.

If a Senior Officer identifies incidents where no service was provided and where an invoice has issued he/she may make a recommendation to the Head of Finance to write off the Invoice.

4.6 Referral to Debt Collection Agency

After the Fire Service Staff have issued the First, Second and Third Reminder Letters the Finance Section is responsible for the collection of unpaid debts. Finance will refer the matter to a Revenue Collector if the Debtor resides within the County, or a Debt Collection Agency if the Debtor resides outside County Sligo for collection.

APPROVAL

A/Chief Fire Officer  Date 19/8/2021
Marian Coakley

A/Director of Services  Date 19/08/2021
Emer Concannon

APPENDIX A – SCALE OF CHARGES

The following schedule of Fire Service Charges, as set by
Chief Executive's Order No 12/17

(Amendment to existing Fire Service charges from 1st February 2017 for users
or beneficiaries of Sligo Fire Authority Service under the Fire Services Act
1981)

<u>Incident</u>	<u>New Scale of Charges</u>
Domestic Chimney Fire	€150.00 per incident
Domestic Fire	€450.00 per Fire Brigade Station in attendance per hour: pro rata for 2 nd hour and thereafter to the nearest quarter hour
Road Traffic Collision	€450.00 per Fire Brigade Station in attendance per hour: pro rata for 2 nd hour and thereafter to the nearest quarter hour
Commercial Fires	€500.00 per Fire Brigade Station in attendance per hour: pro rata for 2 nd hour and thereafter to the nearest quarter hour
Special Services	Full Cost + 30%
False Alarms	€450.00 per incident
False Alarms (Domestic/School)	€150.00 per incident
<u>Copies of Documents</u>	
- Fire Report	€100.00
- Fire Safety Cert	€12.50
- Drawings	€5.00 per copy A1 or A0
-	€3.00 per copy A3
-	€0.20 per copy A4

APPENDIX B – WAIVER APPLICATION FORM

SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR WAIVER/REDUCTION OF FIRE BRIGADE CHARGES

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Name of Applicant: _____ | Date of Incident: _____ |
| 2. Address: _____ | Fire Report No: _____ |
| _____ | Brigade Attended: _____ |
| _____ | Invoice No: _____ |
| Telephone Number: _____ | Mobile No: _____ |
| 3. Customer ID: _____ | 4. Occupation: _____ |
| 5. Employer (if any): _____ | |
| 6. Weekly Income: _____ | |

Particulars of all persons normally resident in the Household:

NAME	RELATIONSHIP TO APPLICANT	AGE	OCCUPATION	EMPLOYERS NAME (IF ANY)	WEEKLY INCOME (Gross)

7. Is the Vehicle/Premises/Property to which the fire service charge applies insured?
YES / NO

8. Does your insurance company cover the fire service charge? YES / NO

NB - If no, please submit a letter from your insurance company on headed paper stating that the charge is not covered

Note - An application for a reduction of a fire service charge will only be entertained for the amount of the charge or for part of charge that is not recoverable from an insurance company or from any other source.

9. If there are any further particulars that you wish to add in support of your application, please give details:

10. AUTHORISATION TO OBTAIN ANY FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED

I hereby authorise Sligo County Council to make any further enquiries they deem necessary in order to verify the accuracy of my application (i.e. from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Welfare, Health Board, Revenue Commissioners, etc. etc.)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Applicant)

11. DECLARATION (Must be completed in all cases)

I declare that the information supplied is correct and represents the true statement of my financial circumstances.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Applicant)

N.B. A FALSE DECLARATION WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF YOUR WAIVER ENTITLEMENT.

PROOF OF INCOME (see notes for guidance)

PART A – APPLICANTS EMPLOYED

Certificate of Applicants' Income

I certify that _____

is employed by me/us _____

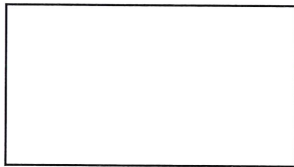
Gross Weekly Income: _____ Net (take home) weekly income _____

Date of commencement of employment: _____

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Employer/on behalf of Employer

**OFFICE
STAMP**



Position: _____

Address: _____

PART B – APPLICANTS ON PENSION OR SOCIAL WELFARE ALLOWANCE

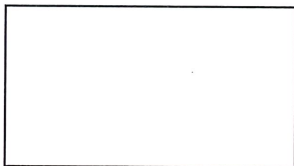
I hereby certify that _____ is at present in receipt of the sum of

€ _____ per week in respect of _____

[nature of benefit.(exclude living alone and fuel allowance)]

Date: _____ Signed: _____

**OFFICE
STAMP**



Position: _____

Employment Exchange/Post Office: _____

Pension Book No: _____

PART C– APPLICANTS DERIVING THEIR INCOME FROM FARMING

Particulars of all lands (owned or leased or other income held separately and not included above by applicant or by member of applicants household:

Land _____ acres _____ Location: _____

Total Profit from Farming activities € _____

Other Income: Source: _____ Amount: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

Application **Granted** **Amount: €** _____

Refused

Signed: _____

Date: _____

NOTES ON COMPLETION OF APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF FIRE SERVICE CHARGES

1. Eligibility for waiving/partial waiving of fire service charges is based on total household income.

Applicants should note that where a waiver is requested for a Chimney Fire that only one waiver application will be considered by Sligo Fire Service for each individual. Subsequent applications for chimney fire by the same applicant or from the same premises will not be considered.

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Single Applicant in receipt of Old Age Pension - 100% Waiver

2. Examples of Proof of Income:-

- (a) Applicants Employed - Please have the Proof of Income (Part A) completed by your employer or attach Employment Detail Summary (replacement for P.60) for year ended 31st December. Part A must be completed in respect of every member of the household who is at present in receipt of income of any kind. Further copies of the form may be obtained on request if necessary.
- (b) Applicants on Pension or Social Welfare Allowances:- Please have Proof of Income (Part B) completed by the Department of Social Welfare or An Post as appropriate. Part B must be completed in respect of every member of the household who is at present in receipt of Social Welfare benefit of any kind including Unemployment Assistance or Benefit, Disability Benefit, Occupational Injuries Benefit, Old Age Pension or Widows Pension, or pension of any kind. Further copies of the form may be obtained on request if necessary.
- (c) Applicants deriving their living from farming - Please complete Proof of Income (Part C) and enclose Form P21.

3. Single applicant, living alone, in receipt of **statutory old age pension** and living alone allowance, as only source of income will qualify for 100% waiver of fire charge. **Fully completed waiver must be submitted.**

4. Forms, which are not completed in ALL respects, will be returned to the applicant.

5. Completed Application Forms together with proof of income should be returned to the Fire Service Section, Sligo County Council, County Hall, Riverside, Sligo.

