

POLICY TITLE: **Nepotism**
POLICY NUMBER: **4010**

4010.1 Purpose

The Esparto Fire Protection District ("District") is committed to maintaining a fair and professional workplace. Employment, promotion, compensation, discipline, and other personnel decisions shall be based on merit, qualifications, performance, and the operational needs of the District.

The District recognizes that, as a small rural fire protection district, it relies on qualified employees and volunteers from the local community, including members of the same family. Employment or volunteer service by relatives is not prohibited, provided favoritism and conflicts of interest are appropriately managed.

4010.2 Definition

For purposes of this policy, "relative" includes a spouse or registered domestic partner; parent, stepparent, or legal guardian; child, stepchild, foster child, or legal ward; sibling, half-sibling, or stepsibling; grandparent or grandchild; parent-in-law, child-in-law, or sibling-in-law; and any person residing in the same household.

4010.3 Equal Employment and Service Opportunities

Applicants, employees, and volunteers shall be considered for appointment, employment, promotion, assignment, and other service opportunities based on qualifications, merit, performance, and the needs of the District.

No person shall receive preferential treatment or be disadvantaged because of a family relationship with a District employee, volunteer, officer, or member of the Board of Commissioners.

4010.4 Conflicts of Interest

Employees, volunteers, officers, and supervisors shall not use their position to improperly benefit or disadvantage a relative.

Whenever another qualified decision-maker is reasonably available, an individual should not participate in a significant personnel decision involving a relative. Significant personnel decisions include hiring, appointment, promotion, compensation, formal performance evaluation, disciplinary action, suspension, or termination.

When another qualified decision-maker is not reasonably available because of the District's limited staffing or organizational structure, the responsible supervisor may make the decision. The decision shall be based on legitimate District needs and, when practical, documented or reviewed by the Fire Chief or Board of Commissioners, as appropriate.

4010.5 Supervisory Relationships

Because of the District's size and staffing model, relatives may serve within the same chain of command, and one relative may have operational or administrative supervisory responsibilities over another. The existence of a supervisory relationship between relatives shall not, by itself, prohibit employment or volunteer service.

Relatives may serve on the same shift, apparatus, emergency incident, training activity, committee, or special assignment. Officers and supervisors shall exercise their authority impartially and shall not provide preferential treatment to a relative.

4010.6 Volunteer Firefighters

Volunteer firefighters are essential to the District's ability to provide emergency services. The District recognizes that small rural fire districts often rely on multiple members of the same family volunteering together.

Accordingly, volunteer firefighters are exempt from any prohibition against relatives serving within the same department or chain of command. A volunteer firefighter may serve under the supervision of a related officer or chief officer and may respond, train, serve on an apparatus, or perform assignments with relatives.

This exemption does not permit favoritism, retaliation, discrimination, or misuse of authority. Volunteer firefighters remain subject to all District rules, standards of conduct, performance requirements, and disciplinary procedures.

4010.7 Board Members

Members of the Board of Commissioners shall comply with all applicable California conflict-of-interest and recusal requirements. Nothing in this policy limits any legal obligation of a Board member to disclose a conflict or refrain from participating in a matter involving a financial interest.

4010.8 Disclosure

Employees and volunteers shall disclose a family relationship covered by this policy to the Fire Chief when the relationship creates, or may reasonably appear to create, a conflict involving hiring, supervision, evaluation, compensation, discipline, or termination.

If the relationship involves the Fire Chief, the disclosure shall be made to the Board Chair. Disclosure of a family relationship does not, by itself, prohibit employment or volunteer service.

4010.9 Violations

Preferential treatment, retaliation, discrimination, misuse of supervisory authority, or failure to disclose a material conflict under this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service.