

Wage and Hour Division, Labor

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purpose of this subpart is to define the circumstances under which individuals may perform hours of volunteer service for units of State and local governments without being considered to be their employees during such hours for purposes of the FLSA.

§ 553.101 “Volunteer” defined.

(a) An individual who performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered, is considered to be a volunteer during such hours. Individuals performing hours of service for such a public agency will be considered volunteers for the time so spent and not subject to sections 6, 7, and 11 of the FLSA when such hours of service are performed in accord with sections 3(e)(4)(A) and (B) of the FLSA and the guidelines in this subpart.

(b) Congress did not intend to discourage or impede volunteer activities undertaken for civic, charitable, or humanitarian purposes, but expressed its wish to prevent any manipulation or abuse of minimum wage or overtime requirements through coercion or undue pressure upon individuals to “volunteer” their services.

(c) Individuals shall be considered volunteers only where their services are offered freely and without pressure or coercion, direct or implied, from an employer.

(d) An individual shall not be considered a volunteer if the individual is otherwise employed by the same public agency to perform the same type of services as those for which the individual proposes to volunteer.

§ 553.102 Employment by the same public agency.

(a) Section 3(e)(4)(A)(ii) of the FLSA does not permit an individual to perform hours of volunteer service for a public agency when such hours involve the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform for the same public agency.

(b) Whether two agencies of the same State or local government constitute the same public agency can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. One factor that would support a conclusion

that two agencies are separate is whether they are treated separately for statistical purposes in the Census of Governments issued by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

§ 553.103 “Same type of services” defined.

(a) The 1985 Amendments provide that employees may volunteer hours of service to their public employer or agency provided “such services are not the same type of services which the individual is employed to perform for such public agency.” Employees may volunteer their services in one capacity or another without contemplation of pay for services rendered. The phrase “same type of services” means similar or identical services. In general, the Administrator will consider, but not as the only criteria, the duties and other factors contained in the definitions of the 3-digit categories of occupations in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* in determining whether the volunteer activities constitute the “same type of services” as the employment activities. Equally important in such a determination will be the consideration of all the facts and circumstances in a particular case, including whether the volunteer service is closely related to the actual duties performed by or responsibilities assigned to the employee.

(b) An example of an individual performing services which constitute the “same type of services” is a nurse employed by a State hospital who proposes to volunteer to perform nursing services at a State-operated health clinic which does not qualify as a separate public agency as discussed in § 553.102. Similarly, a firefighter cannot volunteer as a firefighter for the same public agency.

(c) Examples of volunteer services which do not constitute the “same type of services” include: A city police officer who volunteers as a part-time referee in a basketball league sponsored by the city; an employee of the city parks department who serves as a volunteer city firefighter; and an office employee of a city hospital or other health care institution who volunteers to spend time with a disabled or elderly

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person in the same institution during off duty hours as an act of charity.

§ 553.104 Private individuals who volunteer services to public agencies.

(a) Individuals who are not employed in any capacity by State or local government agencies often donate hours of service to a public agency for civic or humanitarian reasons. Such individuals are considered volunteers and not employees of such public agencies if their hours of service are provided with no promise expectation, or receipt of compensation for the services rendered, except for reimbursement for expenses, reasonable benefits, and nominal fees, or a combination thereof, as discussed in § 553.106. There are no limitations or restrictions imposed by the FLSA on the types of services which private individuals may volunteer to perform for public agencies.

(b) Examples of services which might be performed on a volunteer basis when so motivated include helping out in a sheltered workshop or providing personal services to the sick or the elderly in hospitals or nursing homes; assisting in a school library or cafeteria; or driving a school bus to carry a football team or band on a trip. Similarly, individuals may volunteer as firefighters or auxiliary police, or volunteer to perform such tasks as working with retarded or handicapped children or disadvantaged youth, helping in youth programs as camp counselors, soliciting contributions or participating in civic or charitable benefit programs and volunteering other services needed to carry out charitable or educational programs.

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§ 553.105 Mutual aid agreements.

An agreement between two or more States, political subdivisions, or interstate governmental agencies for mutual aid does not change the otherwise volunteer character of services performed by employees of such agencies pursuant to said agreement. For example, where Town A and Town B have entered into a mutual aid agreement related to fire protection, a firefighter employed by Town A who also is a volunteer firefighter for Town B will not

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have his or her hours of volunteer service for Town B counted as part of his or her hours of employment with Town A. The mere fact that services volunteered to Town B may in some instances involve performance in Town A's geographic jurisdiction does not require that the volunteer's hours are to be counted as hours of employment with Town A.

§ 553.106 Payment of expenses, benefits, or fees.

(a) Volunteers may be paid expenses, reasonable benefits, a nominal fee, or any combination thereof, for their service without losing their status as volunteers.

(b) An individual who performs hours of service as a volunteer for a public agency may receive payment for expenses without being deemed an employee for purposes of the FLSA. A school guard does not become an employee because he or she receives a uniform allowance, or reimbursement for reasonable cleaning expenses or for wear and tear on personal clothing worn while performing hours of volunteer service. (A uniform allowance must be reasonably limited to relieving the volunteer of the cost of providing or maintaining a required uniform from personal resources.) Such individuals would not lose their volunteer status because they are reimbursed for the approximate out-of-pocket expenses incurred incidental to providing volunteer services, for example, payment for the cost of meals and transportation expenses.

(c) Individuals do not lose their status as volunteers because they are reimbursed for tuition, transportation and meal costs involved in their attending classes intended to teach them to perform efficiently the services they provide or will provide as volunteers. Likewise, the volunteer status of such individuals is not lost if they are provided books, supplies, or other materials essential to their volunteer training or reimbursement for the cost thereof.

(d) Individuals do not lose their volunteer status if they are provided reasonable benefits by a public agency for whom they perform volunteer services.