

## Congestion and tunnel charging policy

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Owner: **Assistant Director, People Services**  
Responsible work team: **Policy, Pay and Reward**

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements for paying the London congestion charge and tunnels charge for journeys made into the congestion zone, or using the Silvertown or Blackwall tunnels for the reasons outlined in this policy.
- 1.2 The Brigade does not reimburse Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) payments for journeys in vehicles which are not compliant with ULEZ requirements. Given the importance the Mayor's policy attaches to the air quality of London, the Brigade has no discretion to make payments to compensate staff for this charge.
- 1.3 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
  - Service – We put the public first.
  - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
  - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
  - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
  - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
  - Integrity – We act with honesty.

# 2 Congestion charge

- 2.1 Drivers have to pay to bring a vehicle into central London between 0700 – 1800 hours Monday – Friday, 1200 – 1800 hours Saturday – Sunday and public holidays. The only exception to this is between Christmas day and New Year's day public holiday (inclusive).
- 2.2 Drivers wanting to use a car in the congestion charge zone can pay the congestion zone charge, either in advance or on the day – they will then receive a receipt number which confirms that they have bought a licence for a particular day. Payment of the licence fee will cover them for any number of journeys made into, and out of the zone that day. Licences can be bought on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis by telephone or online.
- 2.3 If paid in advance, or before midnight on the day of travel, the charge is £15.00, There is a £2.50 surcharge for payment made after this, but before midnight within three days of the day of travel. If the charge is not paid by the midnight deadline, then a penalty charge notice of £160 will be issued. This will be reduced to £80 for prompt payment (within 14 days). Transport for London (TfL) offer some discounts, the details are available here: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/discounts-and-exemptions?intcmp=2133>. The Brigade will not be liable for any penalties arising from a failure to pay the charge before midnight within three days of the day of travel.
- 2.4 There are agreements between the Brigade and TfL and the Mayor's Office for a limited range of congestion zone charge exemptions and discounts for vehicles 'used for fire purposes', including the decision to reimburse charges incurred by firefighters, who routinely drive to work and agree to assist the Brigade by using their vehicle to carry out a standby move, if required. The Brigade has also agreed to reimburse the congestion zone charge for other journeys made by staff which satisfy particular conditions. Brigade staff will be reimbursed for one vehicle per day only. Details as to how these arrangements work and the conditions applying in each instance are set out in the following sections.
- 2.5 It is essential that staff claiming reimbursement for the congestion charge complete form C4, available at: Q:\Templates\Forms (Stations)\Congestion Charge giving permission for the

personal data required in that form to be used by the Brigade and TfL to facilitate the processing of exemptions and discounts.

### 3 Tunnels charge

3.1 With effect from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2025, journeys using the Silvertown or Blackwall tunnels will incur a charge, depending on the day of the week, the time of day, direction of travel and vehicle type. The charge will apply year-round with Christmas day the only exception and will apply between 06:00 and 22:00 daily.

3.2 The Brigade is able to support staff by reimbursing them for this cost for a business need:

- When undertaking a standby requiring tunnel travel as an essential part of the journey; or,
- when Control staff have to fallback to an alternative facility; or,
- when required to do so as part of a genuine business need.

The genuine business need may apply when it is impractical to avoid tunnel use e.g. you need to transport equipment to enable you to fulfil your role and/or this is an on the day requirement.

#### Paying the charge

3.3 To pay the charge you must register with the Auto Pay system. This will enable you to access cheaper off-peak rates. The Auto Pay system also covers the Congestion Charge, so if already registered you won't need to re-register provided details are up to date. Arrangements to register details can be accessed [here](#). It does not cost to register your vehicle and all payments for tunnel use will need to be online.

3.4 If you drive a vehicle that is already part of a Fleet Auto Pay scheme, this is an exception. To reclaim this expense, you will need to make a one-off payment outside of Auto Pay to ensure this can be reimbursed. Staff may incur a higher cost on account of not registering for the service and if choosing to pay as a one-off transaction, you will need to notify your authorising officer of the reasons for this. They will decide if it is an appropriate reason before authorising. If payment is not made inside the three-day grace period and you receive a penalty charge notice, the Brigade will not refund this cost.

3.5 Staff registered for Auto Pay will need to provide a copy of the tunnel charge statement as provided by TfL as proof of the cost incurred for auditing purposes, this is to be attached to the online claim form for the charge. Claims will include the Auto Pay account number, vehicle registration number, exact date of travel and approximate time of passing through the tunnel, the cost, and purpose of journey e.g. Standby, or Fallback etc. Reimbursements are not permitted without this information.

3.6 Staff must use Auto Pay online but if for some reason you were not able to, then this needs to be authorised by your line manager and you will need to provide a receipt, or a receipt number, when you submit your claim.

### 4 Exemptions

4.1 Blue badge holders can apply for a 100% discount and will need to pre-[register](#) themselves.

4.2 Brigade vehicles, Brigade contractor vehicles and vehicles equipped as an emergency response vehicle used by senior uniformed officers on the flexible duty system qualify for 100% discount (including home to work travel) only when being driven by an officer rostered for duty who may be mobilised to attend an incident. If the vehicle enters the congestion charge zone or uses the tunnel in any other circumstances within the charging hours (for example, when the officer is not

on duty, if the vehicle is used by someone else for some other purpose or the contractor uses it for non-brigade business), then the contractor or driver will be required to pay the charge.

## **5 Firefighters using their vehicles to travel to another station for a standby duty**

- 5.1 Firefighters (up to and including the role of station officer) who use their vehicle to travel to another station on a standby duty may claim the £15.00 cost of the congestion charge if they are required to drive into, or across the congestion charge zone (if this is the quickest route to get to the receiving station) during the course of the journey. To qualify they must have appropriate insurance cover for driving on Brigade business.
- 5.2 You will need to make a congestion charge payment for the journey and must make sure you get a receipt, or a receipt number, when you buy it. You must make sure that the receipt number is then entered when claiming via the online system, along with other details of the journey to give a complete record and, where issued, the receipt should be attached to the online expenses printed form as further proof. As the journey is for business purposes the payment will not be subject to tax. It is the responsibility of the signing/authorising manager to ensure this information is correct and accurately recorded. The receipt number is essential to allow the Brigade to reclaim from TfL the bulk cost of licence fees paid out for standby duty. The need for the receipt number is a requirement of TfL and is completely beyond the Brigade's control. It is very important that the Brigade recovers all the costs it is entitled to get back from TfL, because it contributes to the cost of the overall package of measures the Brigade is putting in place to assist staff that are most affected by the charging scheme. A failure to provide a receipt, or receipt number will result in the fee not being reimbursed by the Brigade.
- 5.3 If based outside the congestion charge zone, staff eligible to undertake standbys may claim a loan of £25 to cover any initial congestion charges prior to re-imbursement. The loan application form can be reached via this [link](#) or through Hotwire by going to: **HR, pay and employment > Pay, pensions, expenses, loans > Expenses and loans > Standby and training allowance, scrolling down and clicking the 'apply for congestion charge loan' link.**
- 5.4 Staff who are registered for auto pay will need to provide a copy of the congestion charge statement as provided by TfL, as proof of actual congestion charges incurred by individuals for auditing purposes, this is to be attached to the online claim form for the charge. Reimbursements are not permitted without a statement.

## **6 Firefighters driving from home to work at one of the stations in the congestion charge zone**

- 6.1 Firefighters (up to and including the role of station officer) who routinely drive to work at one of the three stations in the zone (Soho, Dowgate, and Lambeth) will have any congestion charges paid for home to work and return journeys reimbursed. This applies only if they agree to use their car to travel to another station for a standby duty, if required, and have appropriate insurance cover for driving on Brigade business.
- 6.2 You will need to make a congestion charge payment for the journey and claim the money back. Payments of the charge should be entered via the online form <https://appuri.london.fire.int/launch.aspx?URI=Expenses> and you can upload the receipt/Auto Pay statement with full details each time a congestion charge payment is made. If you are unable to upload, then the evidence can be printed out and handed to your authorising manager.

- 6.3 Home to work travel claims will need to be certified and authorised by sub/station officers via the online system in line with the timetable for submitting expenses claims. Any claim for reimbursement of the congestion charge must be accompanied by a receipt, receipt number (as outlined in point 3.2 above), or a printout from the auto pay system with full registration details. A failure to meet this requirement will result in the claim not being reimbursed by the Brigade.
- 6.4 Home to work journeys are subject to tax. This is so that eligible drivers will not be out of pocket through paying the charge, the Brigade will pay you the tax due direct to the tax authority in addition to refunding £15.00 cost (as appropriate).
- 6.5 Where you are transferred to a station within the congestion charge zone, eligible drivers will be able to request a repayable advance of £60. This is to cover you for the cost of registering for the congestion charge auto pay registration, and the charge up to the time that you receive reimbursement of your first expenses claim through the payroll. This means that a small number of chargeable journeys will be made before the advance is available. Advances may be claimed using form C2 (home to work application for advance). It is incumbent on the signing/authorising manager to ensure the integrity of the advance, and to ensure that the payment is made in line with the mode of transport used (as outlined in paragraph 3.2 above).
- 6.6 Once the congestion charge auto pay registration is complete, all reimbursement will be at the rate of £15.00. Registration can be managed online and should be facilitated locally, at the earliest opportunity. A failure to use this facility may create risk of missed payments, and any penalties incurred will not be met by the Brigade.

## **7 Vehicles equipped as an emergency response vehicle used by senior uniformed officers on the flexible duty system**

- 7.1 These vehicles (a mix of leased and privately-owned cars) qualify for 100 per cent discount (including home-work travel) only when being driven by an officer rostered for duty who may be mobilised to attend an incident. If the vehicle enters the charging zones in any other circumstances within the charging hours (for example, when the officer is not on duty, or if the vehicle is used by someone else for some other purpose), then the driver will be required to pay the charge.
- 7.2 Form C6 must be completed to update details of the vehicle registration number of the current vehicle, and the name of the registered keeper of the vehicle, and to authorise the Brigade to enter this data on the TfL database of vehicles registered for discount for fire purposes. The completed forms will need to be returned to the Vehicle Administration & Monitoring Section (VAMS) by email to [vams2@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:vams2@london-fire.gov.uk) for details of their vehicle to be registered with TfL. The discount from the charge only applies to vehicles equipped as emergency response vehicles. Courtesy cars or other vehicles being driven on a temporary basis, which are not equipped to allow officers driving them to be mobilised to attend an incident, if required, will not qualify for discount and the charge will have to be paid if they are driven into the zone. The person, not the Brigade, will be liable for the charge, in these circumstances.
- 7.3 Under the terms of the agreement with TfL, the Brigade will be checking that the discount is only claimed when a vehicle is being used for business purposes. At regular intervals TfL will give the Brigade details of journeys within the charging zones made by vehicles the Brigade has registered for discount. This information will be compared with attendance recorded in StARS to check whether officers using the vehicles were rostered for duty on the days that the journeys were made. Having checked with the person concerned, the Brigade will tell TfL about journeys that do not appear to qualify for discount. TfL will then take whatever action it considers is

appropriate. You should make sure that any changes in rota duties are fully reflected in StARS to avoid the possibility of there being any confusion about when you are on duty.

## **8 Other occasions where staff use their own vehicle to travel on Brigade business**

- 8.1 It is Brigade policy that unnecessary journeys by private car should be avoided. However, the Brigade recognises that some other groups of staff will incur the congestion charge or tunnel charge while carrying out certain journeys on behalf of the Brigade – these are instances when the particular circumstances mean using a car is the most suitable choice. In these cases the Brigade will accept the cost of the charge and reimburse the cost through the expenses system. Staff who will be eligible to claim the cost of the charge when carrying out Brigade business, include:
- Fire safety inspectors.
  - Schools officers.
  - Recruitment outreach support staff.
  - Maintenance staff in Technical and Service Support.
  - Transport management staff.
  - Petroleum inspectors.
  - ICT engineers.
  - Water team managers engaged in duties required to ensure adequate water supplies for operational firefighting.
  - Other roles that require a need to transport or use equipment.
- 8.2 The Brigade will reimburse the cost of the charge to these staff for days when they use their car for business use and incur the charge.
- 8.3 If you use your vehicle to attend non-residential training, you will not have the charge reimbursed unless there is a business need.
- 8.4 The Brigade will reimburse the cost of the charge for you when you are performing pre-arranged overtime (PAO) at a station within the charging zones and when you are based in the congestion charge zone picking up kit from their station on the day of their PAO. If you travel through the congestion charge zone to attend pre-arranged overtime, then you will not be reimbursed. Claims predating this will not be reimbursed.
- 8.5 Claims will be reimbursed through the online expenses system.

## **9 Staff who use a car to drive to work because of a disability or childcare responsibilities, or other extenuating circumstances**

- 9.1 The Brigade encourages staff who may qualify for exemption from the charge under the blue badge arrangements to register for the exemption. This will exempt you for paying the congestion charge at all times.
- 9.2 Other instances where you would find it difficult to travel to work on public transport will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This will be carried out by your Assistant Director with input from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team. They will consider what support, if any, the Brigade may be able to provide to lessen the impact of charging. You can record any workplace adjustments in your Workplace Adjustment Passport. Please see details on Hotwire here.

## **10 Congestion charge Auto pay system**

All staff who qualify for reimbursement as detailed in paragraph 4.1 are required to join the auto pay system. The £10 registration cost can be reimbursed in the same way as other congestion charge claims, or in the case of those drawing an advance be deducted from the amount repayable, as referred to in paragraph 4.5. Registration can be done online through this link:

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/17096.aspx#about>

- 10.1 If you are based outside the congestion zone making occasional trips in, you are not expected to join Auto pay, and will continue to claim the £15.00 receipted reimbursement.

## **11 Getting a congestion charge auto pay system customer account**

- 11.1 You can register online using the following link:

<https://congestioncharging.tfl.gov.uk/b/pb/accountType.faces?referrer=cc>

## **12 Making a congestion charge payment**

- 12.1 You can pay the congestion charge by telephone or online using the following link:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/paying-the-congestion-charge>.

## **13 Records**

- 13.1 Please send records by email to [RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk). Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF). Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

## **14 Help and support**

- 14.1 Please contact the HR Helpdesk on extension 89100 option 3 and by email to [IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:IT.HR@london-fire.gov.uk).
- 14.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to [communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk](mailto:communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk) to discuss your needs and options.
- 14.3 The Brigade invites your engagement so that it can learn so if you have a suggestion that can improve this policy then please submit your idea via the Staff Suggestion Scheme on Hotwire as set out in Policy number 887 – Staff suggestion scheme. Any changes do need to go through the agreed engagement, consultation, negotiation or governance requirements.

## Document history

### Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	23/04/24	SDIA	L - 14/05/23	HSWIA	13/06/23	RA	N/A
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### Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 3	Additions made to these paragraphs 3.2, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5.	29/10/2008
Throughout Para 2.1 and 4.1 Para 7 and 7.1 Para 2.4, 3.1, and 4.4 Added paras 12.1 – 12.5 Para 4.5	Policy reviewed as current, changes made as below. Rewording to reflect the shrinking of the Congestion Charge boundaries, and the four stations that now fall outside the zone. Alterations to PPE service provider. Alterations in line with cost revisions of the charge.  Alterations due to instigation of Auto Pay system.  Alteration to the repayable advance payment in light of Auto Pay.	10/02/2011
Page 5 para 10.2 Throughout	Replaced the "Head of Equalities Services" with the "Strategic Advisor to the Commissioner" in line with current job titles. Updated department names in line with the Top Management Review.	18/10/2011
Throughout  Page 2 para 2.6 Page 3 para 3.3 Page 5 para 8.3	Updated department terminology regarding. Brigade and suppliers. New para reinforcing claiming requirements. New para clarifying evidentiary requirements for Auto pay. New para extending provision to PAO.	28/01/2013
Page 5 para 9.1	Additional reference in document path line.	25/06/2013
Pages 4 and 5, paras 6 and 7	References updated from Premier FireServe to Babcock Critical Services Ltd.	10/07/2013
Page 9	SIA date added .	17/07/2013
Page 3	Paragraph 4.1 updated to reflect LSP5 changes.	09/01/2014
Throughout	Increase in TFL Congestion Charges.	18/06/2014
Page 3, para 4.3	'HRM Personnel Services' changed to HR Operations Employment Services.	02/07/2014
Page 9 and 10	Subjects list and Freedom of Information Act exemptions tables updated.	28/01/2015
Throughout	Reviewed as current with no changes.	13/06/2016
Throughout	This policy has been reviewed as current with changes made. References to Petty Cash removed w/e/f : 01/02/2019. New refunding and advance arrangements added. Authorisation levels altered to Watch Manager throughout.	28/02/2019
Throughout	Role to rank changes.	15/10/2019
Throughout	Updates made due to change in rates and arrangements of the congestion charge. Alterations to document references and how to claim in light of the changes to the online expenses system changes.	15/10/2021



Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 1, Para 1.2 & 1.3	Paragraphs added to confirm rates may change and reference to the ULEZ zone.	
Page 7, Para 12.1 Page 8	Payment details updated.  SDIA and HSWIA updated.	16/06/2023
Throughout	Congestion charge details updated.	22/06/2023
Page 2, para 1 Throughout	Introduction consolidated. Minor updates made.	07/11/2023
Page 2, para 1.3	Values included.	25/03/2024
Page 6, para 12.1 Page 7, para 13.2	Data protection details added.  Access to alternative policy format details added.	10/04/2024
Page 5, para 8.2	Workplace Adjustment Passport details added.	22/04/2024
Page 8	Equality impact assessment date updated.	23/04/2024
Page 6, para 12.1 Page 7, para 13.3	Records Services details added. Staff Suggestion scheme access details added.	23/05/2024
Throughout	Minor changes to reference congestion charge consistently.	26/02/2025
Throughout	Tunnel charges included.	07/04/2025
Throughout	Reviewed against revised 2025 NJC Grey Book.	13/05/2025
Page 5, section 8 Page 6, paras 10.2 and 10.3 Page 6, paras 11.2 and 11.3	Removed. Removed and information consolidated into para 10.1  Removed and information consolidated into para 11.1	08/07/2025

## Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Congestion charging	Expenses
Travel	

## Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification