

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

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**SUBJECT: CATASTROPHIC LEAVE**

**POLICY NUMBER: 604**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: JULY 1, 2006**

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**REVISED DATE: JANUARY 23, 2013**

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**POLICY**

It is County policy to allow employees to donate sick leave and vacation credits for use by another employee who, due to a catastrophic illness or injury, is facing financial hardship due to exhaustion of all paid leave balances. The intent of this policy is to provide an employee with income when he/she has exhausted all paid leave balances. Donations must be received within 30 calendar days of the date that the request is issued, and must be credited to the receiving employee as they are needed and in full pay period increments for each subsequent pay period.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

An employee must be employed by the County of San Diego for at least 12 months, within the previous seven years, as a regular employee and have exhausted all paid leave balances to receive catastrophic donations. The employee must be scheduled to be absent for a minimum of one full pay period (unpaid) before applying for catastrophic donations. Employees who are on sick leave restriction or subject to disciplinary action for attendance may not apply for catastrophic donations.

Employees may request catastrophic donations for their own personal illness, or that of their spouse, State and County registered domestic partner, parent, or child.

A catastrophic illness or injury must be more than routine in nature. For example, a normal pregnancy does not qualify, but a pregnancy with serious complications could; a bout of the flu does not qualify, but if it developed into serious pneumonia with complications, it could qualify; a wrenched back requiring a few days of rest does not qualify, but a serious back injury requiring surgery could qualify.

Examples of qualifying conditions include, but are not limited to: hospitalization, heart attack, stroke, cancer and cancer treatments, surgeries related to a diagnosed medical condition, and treatment related to an accident or injury.

Excluded conditions include, but are not limited to: colds, flu, and seasonal allergies; pregnancies, without complications; and cosmetic surgeries, unless reconstructive.

Employees are eligible to donate up to 24 hours of sick leave credits per fiscal year. There is no limit to the number of vacation hours that may be donated by each employee.

**Maximum Amount** – The total credits received by an employee shall not exceed 520 hours; however, credits may be authorized up to 1040 hours upon approval of the receiving employee's appointing authority (additional medical information may be required before approval.) Credits in excess of 1040 hours may be considered by the appointing authority on an individual case basis, and are subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer.

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**PROCEDURES**

**Requesting Employee Responsibility:** An employee who has a catastrophic illness or injury, and meets the eligibility criteria, shall request approval, in writing, from his/her appointing authority, or designee, to solicit catastrophic donations. Documentation from a physician or health care provider substantiating the request must also be submitted. If the employee is incapacitated, the department may solicit donations on the employee's behalf. No more than one department and one county-wide solicitation per employee may be made per fiscal year. If the employee's illness or injury is subsequently found to be work-related, and the employee receives approval for Injury Leave or Labor Code 4850 benefits for peace officers, all catastrophic donations will be returned to donating employees.

**Donating Employee Responsibility:** Donating employees must complete the Sick Leave/Vacation Credit Transfer Authorization Form and submit it to their appointing authority for approval. Donations must be received by the department within 30 calendar days of the date that the request is issued. Transferred credits are irrevocable.

**Department Responsibility:** Donations shall be solicited within the employee's own department first. If the employee does not receive a sufficient number of donations to meet his/her needs, the department may submit a request to the Department of Human Resources to solicit county-wide catastrophic donations.

Donations must be credited in the pay period in which they are received and in full pay period increments for each subsequent pay period. For example, if the employee receives 160 hours, the department will submit 80 hours to Payroll Control for the current pay period, and 80 hours for the next pay period. If the employee is receiving sick leave balance restoration due to State Disability Insurance buy back, then the department shall credit the employee with a sufficient number of catastrophic leave hours that, combined with sick leave restoration, will equal the employee's authorized hours for the pay period.

If the employee receives more donations than are needed for the duration of absence, the departmental payroll representative shall return any excess donations, in the order received, to the donating employee.

Catastrophic leave donations cannot be applied retroactively. The department is responsible for monitoring an employee's donations to ensure that he/she does not exceed the maximum allowable during the fiscal year.

Approval of catastrophic leave may be revoked at any time.

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Payroll Control Responsibility: Upon receipt of authorized donations, Payroll will credit the employee with the number of hours submitted by the department. Catastrophic leave hours are available for use once credited.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Contact the Employee Benefits Division at 888-550-2203.

**REFERENCES**

County of San Diego Compensation Ordinance, Section 4.2.13  
Memoranda of Agreement

**APPROVED BY:**

*Original document approved and signed by Susan Brazeau on 2/20/15.*

Susan Brazeau, Director  
Department of Human Resources

**ATTACHMENTS**

Vacation/Sick Credit Transfer Authorization Form