

Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office
Request for Payout of Vacation Hours for Sheriff's Office Personnel
Detention and Tele Communications Division

The Sheriff's Office is one Fort Bend County Department that provides public safety services 24 hours per day regardless of environmental conditions, risks, threats, or hazards. Throughout calendar year 2021, personnel in Detention and Tele Communications Divisions were unable to take vacation time as needed or requested throughout the year due to:

1. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, when inmates or employees became ill, other employees were required to fill staffing gaps to maintain proper Jail Commission-required staffing levels. Likewise, detention personnel with COVID-19 could not report for work, so their co-workers filled assignment gaps throughout all shifts. Minimum staffing requirements precluded any approval of vacation time for detention personnel and tele communicators throughout the year.
2. Staffing shortages. The high attrition rates in Detention and Communications Divisions created shortages that reached up to 61 total vacancies (39 in Detention; 22 in Communications). Vacation requests were denied due to workload demands and minimum staffing requirements.
3. Inclement weather and storms. Throughout 2021, Sheriff's Office assignments during several storms precluded any approval of vacation requests due to required minimum staffing levels to meet public safety needs. For example, Ice Storm Uri, Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Nicholas required partial or full force mobilization for up to a week. This led to denial of vacation requests during February, August, and September 2021.

At the moment, about 15% of the personnel assigned to the Detention Division have not been able to observe vacation times requested and they risk losing hours they have accumulated beyond the 160 hour limit. Collectively, Detention personnel risk losing \$83,093.44 and Tele Communicators risk losing \$2,060.70.

The Sheriff's Office requests that, due to this year's unusual denial of vacation requests throughout the year, that Commissioners Court approve a payout to each Sheriff's Office employee assigned to Detention and Communications for the vacation hours in excess of 160 hours. This approval would reduce the loss of employee's vacation time and compensate the employees who were denied vacation requests in favor of meeting the county's public safety needs during inclement weather, staffing shortages, and the pandemic.

The accounts to which these liabilities may be obligated are Detention (\$83,093.44) and Communications (\$2,060.70).