

July 19, 1999
Re: IO-99-139

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the propriety of accepting air fare from Globe, Inc. to travel to New Hampshire to look into the possibility of upgrading some of your safety equipment. You indicated that some firefighters were injured in December and you believe that their injuries may have been due to problems with their gear.

As I advised you by phone, reimbursement for travel expenses is considered a gift under §1-101(l) of the Public Ethics Law. A gift of travel expenses, given by an entity that is doing business or seeking to do business with your agency, is a non-permissible gift under §3-106. A county employee can only accept reasonable travel expenses that are paid in conjunction with a legitimate speaking engagement at a conference, meeting, or other function.

The trip constitutes legitimate county business, and there is nothing in the ethics law that would prohibit the county for paying these expenses. I am enclosing for your review, a previous informal opinion that I sent you in April, responding to a similar question regarding travel expenses. If you have additional questions, call any time.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director

Enclosure