

Chapter 15
Issue 3 03/06/2025

SUBJECT: PROBATIONARY PERIOD

I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes a standardized process governing the probationary status of City employees in accordance with Personnel Rule IX: Probationary Period.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all City departments. In cases where any provision of this policy conflicts with an approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and a recognized employee organization, the provisions of the MOU shall take precedence. Exceptions to this policy require approval from the City Manager.

III. AMENDMENTS

This policy may be amended by the City Manager.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. General Guidelines

The probationary period is an integral component of the employee selection process, providing both the City and the probationary employee an opportunity to assess the suitability of a continued employment relationship. Either party may discontinue employment during the probationary period.

B. Duration of Probationary Period

Employees appointed or promoted to a position in the competitive service shall serve a probationary period as follows:

1. All employees, except for those identified in Personnel Rule IV, Section 4, shall serve a six-month (6) probationary period.
2. All employees identified in Personnel Rule IV, Section 4, shall serve a one-year (12-month) probationary period.

Extension of the Probationary Period

The probationary period may be extended for a maximum of six (6) months subject to the following:

1. The Department Head submits a written request for an extension.



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2. The request is submitted to the City Manager and must include:
 - Employee's name and classification
 - Date of hire and date of appointment to the current classification (if different)
 - Justification for the extension
 - Corrective actions planned to address deficiencies
 - Employee's immediate supervisor
 - Expectations for improved performance
 - Potential liability considerations if the probationary period is extended
3. If approved in writing by the City Manager, the probationary period may be extended for up to six (6) months.

Extension Due to Extenuating Circumstances

Employees who experience challenges in obtaining a required driver's license or certification due to extenuating circumstances beyond their control may be granted an additional extension of up to six (6) months, for a total probationary period of up to one (1) year. The extension request must meet the following criteria:

1. The delay in obtaining the required license or certification is due to factors outside the employee's control (e.g., testing availability, administrative processing delays, documented medical or personal hardships).
2. The employee has made reasonable and documented efforts to obtain the required license or certification within the original probationary period.
3. The Department Head submits a written request to the City Manager, detailing the specific circumstances preventing the employee from obtaining the required license or certification.
4. The City Manager, upon review and determination that the extension is warranted, approves the request in writing.

Merit Increase Eligibility During Extended Probation

An employee whose probationary period is extended under extenuating circumstances may be eligible for a **one-step merit increase**, provided they meet the following conditions:

1. The extension is due to challenges in obtaining the required driver's license or certification through no fault of their own.
2. The employee meets or exceeds performance expectations in all other essential job functions as documented in their performance evaluations.



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3. The Department Head submits a recommendation for the merit increase to the Human Resources Director, including performance documentation supporting the request.
4. The Human Resources Director, upon approval, authorizes the merit increase effective at the employee's original probationary completion date.

If the employee fails to obtain the required license or certification within the approved extended probationary period, their employment may be subject to termination in accordance with this policy.

C. Transfers During Probationary Period

Transfers during the probationary period are only permitted within the same department (intra-departmental). Transfers between departments are not allowed. A transfer does not change or extend an employee's probationary period.

D. Performance Evaluation During Probation

The performance of probationary employees must be documented in writing as early as possible to provide timely feedback and allow for necessary improvements. Formal performance evaluations must be conducted using the City's standard evaluation format:

- **Midpoint Evaluation** – Conducted at the halfway mark of the probationary period.
- **Final Evaluation** – Completed no later than two (2) weeks before the probation period ends.

E. Dismissal or Demotion During Probation

A final performance evaluation must be submitted to the Human Resources Department at least two (2) weeks prior to the end of the probationary period. If an employee is to be released from probation, the following requirements must be met:

1. Department managers and supervisors should consult with the Human Resources Department and City Attorney prior to issuing a notice of rejection.
2. The rejection notice must be served before midnight on the last day of the probationary period.
3. A copy of the rejection notice must be sent to the Human Resources Department and the City Manager.
4. The rejection notice should not contain reasons for the rejection. Avoid unnecessary language in the written notice. (See Attachment A: "Notice and Order of Rejection").



F. Probationary Period for Promotions

Employees promoted to a new classification must serve the required probationary period for that classification. During this period, a promoted employee may be demoted to their previous classification or separated from employment if it is determined to be in the City's best interest.

If an employee is rejected during a promotional probationary period, they may be reinstated to their previous classification under the following conditions:

1. The employee was not discharged from the City service pursuant to City Code, Section 20-9.
2. A vacancy exists in the previous classification. If a probationary employee is currently filling that position, the rejected employee may request placement, and the probationary employee will be returned to the appropriate eligibility list.
3. If no immediate vacancy is available, the rejected employee will be placed on a reemployment list for future vacancies.

G. Notice of Dismissal or Demotion During Probation

The appointing authority must provide written notification of a dismissal or demotion to the Human Resources Officer and the affected employee at least fourteen (14) calendar days before the effective date of such dismissal or demotion. At the City's discretion, two (2) weeks of pay may be provided to the dismissed employee in lieu of notice.

H. Probationary Period for Demoted Employees

1. Voluntary Demotion:
 - a. A non-probationary employee who voluntarily demotes is not required to serve a new probationary period.
 - b. Employees on probation are not eligible for voluntary demotion, except for those serving a promotional probationary period.
2. Involuntary/Disciplinary Demotion:

Employees who are involuntarily demoted must complete a new probationary period for the lower classification.

I. Completion of Probation

An employee is considered to have successfully completed probation and granted permanent status in the Competitive Service when the following conditions are met:



SAMPLE – ATTACHMENT A

(Must be printed on City of Lompoc letterhead)

NOTICE AND ORDER OF REJECTION OF PROBATIONARY APPOINTMENT

Pursuant to the provisions of the City of Lompoc Personnel Ordinance and Rules, and Chapter 15 of the Personnel Procedures Manual, you are hereby notified of your rejection from probationary employment as <Enter Employee’s Job Title> with the <Enter Department and Division>. Accordingly, your employment in this capacity is hereby terminated effective <Enter MMMM, DD, YYYY>.

Effective immediately, you are relieved of all duties and directed to return all department-issued equipment and any other City property in your possession. Should you have any questions regarding the separation process, you may contact the Human Resources Department at (805) 875-8205.

By order of the <Enter Department Name> Department, City of Lompoc.

(Department Head Signature)
<Enter Full Name of Department Head>
<Enter Job Title>

(Date)

I, <Enter Employee’s Full Name>, hereby acknowledge receipt of this Notice and Order of Rejection consisting of one (1) page.

Date: _____

Signature of Employee