

 <p>NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.</p> <p>Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Section: Finance</p>	<p>Procedure Title: Deposit Return and Patron Refund Procedures</p> <p>Directive: FIN-PCD-016</p> <p>Effective Date: 08/15/2019</p>
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Summary

This guidance document establishes the process to be used for the refunding of deposit returns and amounts paid by patrons for goods and services that have been received by the patron.

Procedure

Refunds and deposit returns are to be made in accordance with applicable State Laws. Section 13.15 of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Law defines the differences between deposit returns and refunds. In summary:

Deposit Returns – are returns of deposit payments made by patrons where service paid for have not yet been provided or agency facilities were not used (i.e., a pavilion reservation that is canceled prior to the reserved date).

Patron Refunds – are the return of fees paid to patrons “after the fact,” where services have been available and facilities used (i.e., there is an issue over the quality and availability of such services or the patron was inadvertently overcharged). Under New York State Finance Law (Article 7, §111), the payment and refund of state moneys may only be issued after audit by the New York State Office of the State Comptroller.

In no case may deposit returns or refunds be returned in the form of cash to the patron at the facility or regional level.

The FIN 123 Refund Request form is to be used to process both deposit returns and patron refunds (Note: camping refunds and deposit returns are refunded by the reservation system or OSC check, depending on the original payment.) The FIN 123 can be electronically downloaded from the Guidance Documents section of the OPRHP intranet. Once completed and approved, the FIN 123 can be sent via email to FIN123@parks.ny.gov along with the supporting documentation which must include proof of original payment (i.e., copy of sales draft, check, deposit slip, permit application, etc.)

Instructions for Completion of the FIN123

- Staff must document the reasons for the request for refund on the FIN123 and, if applicable, the recommended disapproval.
- Each FIN123 should be sequentially numbered at the facility level. The **Refund Number** should include a two letter abbreviation of the region, two letter abbreviation of the park, two digit abbreviation of the fiscal year, and the number of the refund request, using three digits. For example, the sequential number for the third refund of the 2016-17 fiscal year at Buttermilk Falls State Park would be FL-BF16-003. The refund number is entered in Section 4 of the FIN123.
- The FIN123 should be legible and contain the correct spelling of the name and address of the payee. If available, please include the telephone number and/or email address of the patron for further verification, if necessary.
- Since the form is an agency form, the comment section should **NOT** be completed by the patron as a way of documenting their request for refund. Supporting documentation should be attached (i.e., written request from the patron, patron comment form, e-mail correspondence, etc.) to support the patron's request.
- The patron should **NOT** be given a copy of the FIN123 for their records.
- The park staff should refrain from providing information to the Patron as to whether the refund will be approved or the calculation of the amount that will be refunded.
- A copy of the **original proof of payment** (i.e., copy of the signed sales draft, patron's check, bank deposit slip, camping/cabin receipt and permit, permit application, etc.) must be attached to the FIN123 Refund Request.
- Payments may only be made, following the review and approval by the park manager and the regional director (or their designee). The regional office will submit the request to the Albany Office Revenue Unit for processing. The request can be sent via e-mail to: FIN123@parks.ny.gov.
- Regional Directors that elect to assign a designee must complete the Regional Director Designee Proxy Form.
- Approvers must provide a copy of their signature to the Revenue Unit for comparison purposes.
- Approvers are encouraged to use digital signatures when possible.

Deposit Return Calculation Criteria

The amount of the deposit that is to be returned is determined by the initial deposit amount and amount of notice provided for cancellation.

Examples of deposit returns include voids or overcharges, cancellations in advance, duplicate payments and partial credits:

□ Camping and Cabins

- (a) Cancellations made eight (8) days or more prior to the scheduled arrival date will result in a deposit return equal to the original payment amount less the non-refundable reservation fee and the applicable cancellation fee. No additional agency service or processing fees shall be assessed. No “one night penalty” is assessed.
In the reservation system, no authorization is needed. If refund set up is incorrect, a note in the refund section is required.
- (b) Cancellations made less than eight (8) days prior to the scheduled arrival date will result in a deposit return equal to the original payment amount less the non-refundable reservation fee, the applicable reservation cancellation fee, and an additional fee equivalent to one night’s camping fee (to include all surcharges, prime site, and electric fees, as applicable). For cabins, one night’s fee is equivalent to one-fourth of the weekly rate, including any applicable utilities.
In the reservation system, the Park manager approves. A note is required in the refund section of the reservation system which includes whether manager approves or disapproves of the refund that has been set up. The note should include the date and time the patron cancelled and the reason for the cancellation.
- (c) No deposit returns will be issued for cancellations made after 9:00PM on the scheduled date of arrival. Parks have until 10:00AM the following morning to process any refunds for cancellations made after office hours during the prior day.
- (d) For Access Pass camping and cabin cancellations, the appropriate cancellation and one-night penalty fees shall be assessed in the same manner as other reservations.
- (e) Late arrivals and “no shows” are not eligible to receive a deposit return. However, under special circumstances, such requests may be processed as patron refunds.

□ Marina Slip Rentals

- (a) Transient, overnight dockage at marinas shall follow the same policies and fee structures as camping (see above).
- (b) For seasonal marina slip rentals, deposit returns may be issued as follows:
 - 1. For cancellations prior to May 15th – 100% deposit return

2. For seasonal departure or cancellations prior to June 15th – 50% deposit return
 3. For seasonal departure prior to July 15th – 25% deposit return
 4. No deposit will be returned after July 15th; however, under special circumstances, such requests may be processed as refunds
- (c) Applicable processing fees are to be deducted from the deposit return.

□ Picnic Shelter, Pavilion and Area Reservations

- (a) For cancellations made more than 30 days prior to the reserved date, a (100%) deposit return shall be issued, less the processing fee.
- (b) For cancellations made ten (10) days or more before the reserved date, a 50% deposit return shall be issued, less the processing fee.
- (c) No deposit return shall be issued for cancellations made less than ten (10) days prior to the date of the reservation. However, under special circumstances, such requests may be processed as refunds, less the processing fee.

□ Other Deposit Returns

- (a) Returns of Damage Deposits shall be made without assessment of any processing fees and surcharges.
- (b) Voids, overcharges and duplicate payments shall be made without assessment of any processing fees. Voids must be issued on the same day as the original payment transaction and may only be issued where no service has been delivered.
- (c) There are no deposit returns for Golf. As a general rule, golfers are issued rain checks, allowing the golfer to return on another day without the payment of additional fees.

Patron Refunds

Patron Refunds, regardless of the activity or method of payment, must be requested through the submission of a FIN123, along with the supporting documentation **including proof of the original payment** (e.g., copy of the signed sales draft, credit card settlement slip, patron's check, bank deposit slip, permit application, camping/cabin receipt and permit, etc.).

Same Day Voids

Facilities may provide same day voids to patrons, subject to the following guidelines: Providing same day voids to patrons at all facilities is not mandatory. It is based on usage patterns, geography, fee structures, etc. Examples of transactions authorized as same day voids include:

- Correct same day errors (e.g., duplicate credit card charge).
- Credit a vehicle use fee for a camper who has paid for park entrance. Supervisory staff may offset the camping fees with the Vehicle Usage Fee already paid by the patron for walk-in campers. This can be done in the reservation system by

selecting “apply discount” and selecting the appropriate amount under the “available discount for gate passes” drop down menu.

- Credit a vehicle use fee for a patron who subsequently purchases an Empire Pass. The credit can be applied towards the purchase of the Empire Pass (i.e., patron pays \$72 for the \$80 annual pass if an \$8.00 VUF was paid, copy of the VUF ticket should be attached to the documentation supporting the payment for the annual pass).
- “Twenty minute turnaround” situation (to be used at the park’s discretion) where a patron’s request to briefly enter the park and leave (i.e., drop someone off or scout out a campsite).

Appropriate same day void documentation, including credit card slips, surrendered VUF tickets and receipts, are to be retained with the daily cashier’s receipts and used to reconcile each cashier’s cash drawer at the end of the day (or shift). Same day voids may be issued by credit card or check, with appropriate documentation, but can **never be issued in cash.**

- Credit card same day voids must be completed at the credit card terminal at which the original transaction was made with the credit card.
- Any same day void transactions that were originally made in cash must go through the FIN123 process and will be paid by check to the patron.
- If the patron issues a check and then decides to cancel the transaction, the check may be returned to the patron, providing this is done on the same day that the check was received by the park. Staff should write “VOID” on the check. Prior to returning the check staff must make a copy, but is required to redact (i.e., whiteout) the account information on the bottom of the check.

In no case may a “same day void” be carried over to the next day or be made retroactively. If processed on a following day, a FIN123 will be required and will be processed as a patron refund.

The same day void process may not be used to issue patron refunds.

Forms

FIN123

Regional Director Designee Proxy Form

Other Related Information

Article 7, §111 of the New York State Finance Law

History

- 08/15/2019 Procedure updated to provide clearer guidance for cancellation of picnic shelter, pavilion and area reservations.
- 03/15/2019 Procedure updated to reflect changes made to Refund Number, reservation system and FIN123 form.
- 05/18/2017 Procedure created and effective immediately