



## **COURSE FEE INCREASE: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) May 2024**

### **Transparency and Justification:**

#### **Why now?**

- Preparing a balanced budget required a practical approach and evaluation of NSP's strategic objectives, revenue streams and expenses.
- We are confronted with three serious realities: 1) inflation impacting operations 2) shift in sponsors; and 3) failure to increase dues and course fees consistently over the years.
- Escalating costs in operations, technology upgrades, store/warehouse and facility maintenance, and personnel have eroded the purchasing power of our revenue.
- A comprehensive review highlighted the immediate need to adjust our course fees to ensure the financial health and sustainability of our programs while continuing to meet our strategic goals for the upcoming years.

#### **Why is the OEC course fee increasing, and how will the additional revenue be used?**

- NSP has not increased the cost of the OEC course since 2010, *providing 14 years of fee stability to our members.*
- A thorough analysis of course fees at peer institutions reveals that our current fee structure is significantly below (by up to 20 times) the market average, undervaluing our products, particularly our flagship OEC course.
- Over the years, we have strived to maintain the quality and relevance of our OEC courses, while keeping the associated fees as accessible as possible.
- The volunteer instructor/delivery model makes it possible to keep the course costs much lower than comparable courses; however, raising fees makes it possible to continue investing in education.
- The additional revenue from the course fees will be directly used to address rising costs, while also continuing to support the essential year-round services that our personnel and educational systems provide.
- We always want OEC to be accessible and represent a value relative to other similar training courses; but the price of our courses has dramatically lagged in the market. This adjustment is essential for maintaining the excellence and credibility of our programs.

#### **What is the new OEC course fee?**

- The one-time OEC national course fee will be \$150. This applies to all OEC course options, including traditional, hybrid, challenge, and modified challenge courses.
- Full-time students of any age with a valid ID will receive a 20% discount.
- OEC refresher courses continue to remain free to members.

- Access to all courses, including OEC will require membership. Non-members will no longer be eligible to take OEC. This includes Associate members, many of whom are students and will get a student discount with valid student ID.

#### **What is the new OFC course fee?**

- OFC will be \$60.
  - ***An OFC course update is in development, expected in FY25***

#### **When is this effective?**

- Updated OEC course fees will be effective July 1, 2024.
- The new fee will be applied to all courses on July 1 (regardless of when they are registered). All students that enroll on or after July 1, 2024, will be charged the new fee.
- Registration for the course will require that students are members. *Note that new members who pay membership before July 1 will have to pay for the new membership again before the end of the year.*

#### **How was the amount of the increase determined?**

- A careful consideration and analysis of peer institutions revealed that our current fee structure is significantly below the market average, undervaluing our products.
- By increasing the course fee, OEC remains well below the market average but is better positioned in terms of recognizing the value and quality of this core product and ensuring it remains competitive and sustainable.
- The increase allows us to raise the necessary operating revenue, while also remaining affordable and below the price points of other institutions.

#### **How much do competitors charge for courses like OEC? Some examples include:**

- Competitor certifications, such as WFR and EMT, can cost anywhere from \$800-\$3,000.
- They also charge for refresher courses. As an example, WFR costs anywhere from \$775 to \$1,700, and costs \$350 to \$435 to refresh annually.
- At \$150, we will still be significantly less than comparable courses in the market, reflecting the NSP volunteer instructor model.

#### **How much do competitors charge for courses like OFC? Some examples include:**

- A basic 4-hour American Red Cross First Aid and CPR course: \$125.
- A 16 Hour American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid & Remote Care course: \$300
- NOLS Wilderness First aid: \$345 to \$375

#### **Why only OEC/OFC? Is this carrying the cost of other programs and the organization?**

- OEC is NSP's cornerstone course and the only course for which we have traditionally charged at the national level.
- This one-time fee is paid by new candidates for a product they are receiving. It also includes free annual refreshers.
- We believe this fee increase is a fair solution for all NSP members as it more accurately reflects the true cost of creating, supporting and delivering the OEC course and refreshers.

## **Impact on Recruiting:**

### **Will the OEC increase affect recruiting?**

- We understand the concerns about the potential impact of the OEC course fee increase on recruitment. While the cost of courses can influence decisions for prospective members, we do not believe the adjustment will significantly impact our ability to attract new patrollers
- A \$150 course fee today is still very affordable for its value.
- We understand the concerns about the fee increase for the OEC course and its perception of a significant amount. However, when compared to similar training programs in emergency care and first responder courses, a \$150 fee still represents a strong value, offering high-quality, comprehensive training at a competitive price.
- This fee will impact only new candidates who are taking the OEC.
  - Last year, we had over 2,300 OEC candidates.
- The course remains competitive and is still the most affordable option for the value that it provides, which should help with recruiting.
- National is investing in marketing, which should also help with recruiting.
  - By improving our visibility and reach, and effectively communicating the value and benefits of becoming a ski patroller, we aim to attract a diverse and dedicated group of new members.

### **How will new members afford the upfront inclusive costs of approximately \$900 for their first year as a patroller?**

- As we all experienced, there is an initial investment; but that carries over into the membership on a long-term basis with annual refreshers, available courses, etc.
- *Please see the website page, [Join Us](#), for an illustrative breakdown of costs for a new volunteer patroller.*

### **As we work to attract a new generation of members, how will students afford the increased OEC course fee?**

- NSP will offer a 20% discount for students taking the OEC, with a valid ID.
- We continue to expand our pool of candidates, including the next generation.

## **Impact on Value:**

### **What additional benefits will I receive for the increased course fee?**

- This year, we moved the OEC flagship course from a separate learning management system (JBL) into NSP's Learning Management System (LMS). (available in June)
- In addition, we modernized the course by creating online, modularized content.
- The OEC refresher remains free.
- Please see the website for a comprehensive list of [Member Benefits](#).

### **What other value does the OEC course bring?**

- Your investment in our OEC courses is an investment in your own skills and abilities as a patroller.
- The knowledge and expertise you gain through these courses are invaluable; not only in serving our community but also in ensuring the safety and well-being of yourself and others in emergency situations.
- Placing a higher value on the OEC course as our primary offering is an important step toward our future sustainability, enabling us to continue investing in our training efforts long term.

### **Alternatives and Communication:**

#### **Were there any alternatives to course-fee increase considered?**

- We understand that any increase in fees may cause concern, and we want to assure you that this decision was not made lightly.
- We also have taken steps to minimize costs while still ensuring the sustainability of our programs in the long term.
- While we are working hard on new sources of revenue, those things take time to materialize.

#### **How far in advance were members informed of the course increase?**

- Members were notified of the OEC course-fee increase on **May 14**, approximately six weeks before the increase becomes effective.

#### **Is there an opportunity for members to provide feedback on the course-fee increase?**

- Your feedback is crucial.
- We understand you might have questions or concerns, and we are here to listen.
- Please direct questions to [memberservices@nsp.org](mailto:memberservices@nsp.org)

***Please see Member Benefits on the website for a comprehensive list of benefits and membership tiers. Visit Join Us to view illustrative startup costs for a volunteer patroller.***