

WORKPLACE ANTI-VIOLENCE POLICY

Purpose

All employees, volunteers and firefighters (hereinafter referred to “employees”) of Fire District No. 1 (“District”) have the right to a safe, secure and violence-free work environment. The District recognizes this right and acknowledges that nothing is more important than the safety and security of its employees. The District’s prohibition against violent, threatening, or intimidating behavior applies to all persons involved in its operations. As such, the District shall protect its employees and visitors against acts of violent, threatening or intimidating behavior that may occur in the work environment.

Policy

The District is committed to providing a workplace that is free from acts of violence or threats of violence. In keeping with this commitment, the Commissioners have established a policy that provides “zero tolerance” for actual or threatened violence against co-workers, other volunteers, visitors, or any other persons who are either on our premises or have contact with employees in the course of their duties. Workplace violence is defined as actions or words that endanger or harm another employee or result in other employees having a reasonable belief that they are in danger. Such actions include:

- Verbal or physical harassment
- Verbal or physical threats
- Assaults or other violence
- Any other behavior that would cause a reasonable person to feel unsafe

The Commissioners’ policy requires an immediate response to all reports of violence. All threatening incidents will be investigated and documented by the Commissioners, their designated representative or counsel.

The following disciplinary actions may also be taken:

- Oral reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Suspension
- Termination/Removal

This list is not exhaustive of all remedial action and the Commissioners may take whatever disciplinary or remedial actions they deem necessary and proper.

It is the responsibility of all employees to report all threatening behavior to management immediately.

Guidelines

Intimidation, threats, harassment, and assaults are prohibited and distract from a positive work environment. Furthermore, intimidation, threats and harassment can be precursors to workplace violence. Ignoring an individual who exhibits these behaviors sends the message that such behaviors are acceptable; consequently, the behaviors are likely to continue and may even increase. Therefore, it is incumbent on all employees to identify and report these behaviors immediately so that appropriate action may be taken.

The District system of ensuring that all employees, including supervisors and managers, comply with work practices that are designed to make the workplace more secure, and do not engage in threats or physical actions which create a security hazard for others in the workplace includes:

- Informing all employees of the provisions of The District Workplace Anti-Violence Policy
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the District's workplace security measures.
- Recognizing employees who perform work practices which promote security in the workplace.
- Providing training and/or counseling to employees whose performance is deficient in complying with work practices designed to ensure workplace security.
- Disciplining employees for failure to comply with workplace security practices.

Warning Signs of Potential Violence

There are often signs serving as a warning that violence in the workplace may occur. Please review the following list of early warning signs that an individual may act out violently, keeping in mind that demonstration of one or many of the actions on the below list do not automatically point to certain violence.

- Increase in use of alcohol or using drugs.
- History of violent or aggressive behavior or frequent physical fighting off or on duty.
- Displaying a loss of control, (i.e., loss of temper on a frequent basis, frequently for unsubstantiated reasons, or over minor issues).
- Either joking or making serious direct or veiled threats.
- Physically, verbally or emotionally intimidating others or instilling fear, for example via harassing phone calls, emails and/or stalking.
- Being obsessed with one's job and having no known outside interests.
- Being a loner and/or expressing a strong desire for a personal or romantic relationship with a co-worker. Under these circumstances, the co-worker may feel threatened and report the unwanted attention.
- Obsession with weapons or militia, particularly if this is new behavior for a member.
- Feeling constantly disrespected, demonstrating a "me versus the world" attitude.
- Experiencing difficulty with authority, for example, feeling discriminated against, harassed, or intentionally targeted. Does not accept criticism well and commonly harbors resentment.

- Expressing desperation, significant frustration or depression over recent professional, personal, or financial problems.
- Fascination with other recent incidents of violence and approval of the use of violence.
- Disregard for safety, thus presenting a risk to self and others.
- Demonstrates a lack of conscience and/or abuse towards other persons or animals.
- Vandalism or property damage.
- Failing to acknowledge the feelings or rights of others.
- Having been a victim of violence or bullying.

What to Do

If you witness a potentially violent situation, or are dealing with a threatening or violent person, do not place yourself in danger or try to intercede. You should not attempt to challenge or disarm the individual. If possible, escape the scene and immediately contact local law enforcement authorities.

Tips proven to be effective in this type of situation are as follows:

- Try to remain calm.
- Keep a distance of 4-6 feet.
- Do not touch the threatening or *violent* individual.
- Make constant eye contact, but do not try to "stare down" the threatening or *violent* person.
- Actively listen and respond to the individual.
- Ask the person making the threats or acting violently for solutions.
- If a supervisor or other appropriate authority can be safely notified of the need for assistance without endangering your safety or that of others, do so.

Complaint Procedure

Employees are encouraged to contact the appropriate law enforcement authorities without first informing their immediate supervisor if they reasonably believe that imminent danger to their own safety or that of others exists.

Any employee who feels that he or she has been subjected too or has knowledge of a violation of this Policy should report the incident directly to a Chief Officer or to a Commissioner. If circumstances prevent reporting the incident directly to the employee's supervisor, the employee should report the incident to any other supervisory employee with whom they feel comfortable reporting your complaint. One of the designated individuals must be promptly advised of such complaint. If the complaint involves a direct supervisor, the employee is not required to complain to that direct supervisor. The complaint should then be made to any of the other above-mentioned individuals. A complaint shall be investigated in a timely manner.

- A. The complaint filed must include the following information:

- (1) The name and department of the complainant;
 - (2) The name and department of the charged party;
 - (3) The nature and circumstances, in detail, of the alleged violation, including but not limited to the injuries or consequences suffered by the complainant, the names of any witnesses to such actions and the duration of the actions questioned; and
 - (4) Whether such violation has been previously reported to a supervisor or other person, and if so, when and to whom.
- B. Nothing in this section shall prevent the complainant from providing other information or documents he/she believes are essential to the fair adjudication of their case.
- C. The initial complaint may be made orally or in writing. If the complaint is made orally, same shall be reduced to a written document, which shall, if it is deemed accurate, be signed by the complainant. If an individual is uncomfortable making a written complaint, the District may proceed with its investigation without a formal written complaint.

Investigation Procedure:

Once a complaint has been registered or a violation has become known to the District, a prompt, fair and thorough investigation will be conducted to determine the meritorious character of the complaint. The District may suspend employees suspected of violence or threats of violence pending investigation.

If the District determines that a violation of this Policy has occurred, the individual who engaged in such conduct shall face immediate and appropriate disciplinary action based upon the severity of the complaint and any prior history of past charges made against the individual and disciplinary action involving the individual. Disciplinary action may include being suspended pending the hearing, a written warning, suspension, demotion, or termination of employment.

False Accusations:

Since a violation of this policy may have serious consequences, false accusations are, and will be treated as, a disciplinary offense and will result in a level of punishment appropriate for a person engaging in such behavior.

Commented [a1]: This entire section was removed as much of it doesn't apply to our District and also it seems to leave off without any actual Complaint Procedure. (Instead I am inserting language you used in the anti-harassment policy in Section 4 (Complaint Procedure) and Section 5 (Investigation Procedure).)