



Volume 13 Issue 8
August, 2020



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2020 STATISTICS

July 1 — July 31

District Average Response Time:

9 min. 28 sec.

Responses by Type:

Fire: 19

EMS: 291

Other: 124

Total: 434



Proudly serving the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, Custer, Laurel and the unincorporated areas of Lynden & Bellingham

“Providing Quality Service for a Safe Community”

Good Policies Support a Culture of Trust



By Scott Eskvitt

As I read a line-of-duty-death report recently, two statements jumped off the page. First, the report concluded that “General Orders are often contradictory, unclear, or too cumbersome for personnel to glean operational value.” Second, it stated investigators had observed “lack of trust with department leadership, based upon a widely held belief that department leaders are not promoted or assigned based on merit or experience.”

Wow. Rarely do we see conclusions addressing systemic problems within an agency, but there it was. The firefighter’s death, in part, could be attributable to poor policies and lack of trust in leadership.

Trust between firefighters and their officers, or lack of it, is part of fire department culture—the department’s DNA, if you will. Trust is key to fire-

ground safety and performance. It is imperative to successful execution of an incident action plan (IAP). However, a department can’t have a policy that says, “Firefighters shall trust their officers,” and you can’t include a “trust” action in an IAP. Instead, it’s a cycle: Good policies support a fire department culture of trust and a culture of trust supports successful execution of a fire-ground strategy.

Lack of trust in business draws a straight line to loss of revenue. Lack of trust in the fire service draws a straight line to loss of life. Let’s start from this premise: Officers who don’t consider trust to be necessary to crew safety and performance probably don’t have the trust of their crews. On the other hand, officers committed to transparency, honesty, leading by example, their own professional improvement and mentoring their crews? It’s likely that a culture of trust exists within that department.

How Policy and Procedure Support Fire Department Culture

Let’s take a closer look at three areas in which good policies and procedures, consistently

applied and enforced, can build trust within the department.

1. Promotions. We all know that sometimes even the most well-intentioned promotion turns out to be less than ideal. Bad promotions are bound to cause disruption in the department, but they don’t have to lead to a lack of confidence in the entire promotional process. When leaders can point to external standards (e.g., civil service list rules, required certifications or local personnel rules), leadership capabilities, and performance-based measures to justify the promotion, it can help alleviate any breach of trust caused by a promotion that didn’t work out. Good policies addressing officer training, selection, and advancement, among other subjects, create consistency and objectivity. In doing so, they support a culture of trust, giving firefighters confidence that decisions are made for the right reasons, not based on favoritism or popularity.

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Policies cont.

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Please remember to keep the district up to date with any changes including your contact information.

All changes should be directed to Kelly.

These changes may include:

Phone

Address

Email

Family Additions

Name changes

2. Conduct. Fair and legally defensible policies addressing firefighter behavior, such as conduct standards, prohibitions on discrimination, and handling of personnel complaints and grievances, should include specific reference to how officers handle, shepherd, and resolve these matters. Consistent interpretation and administration of such policies further demonstrates and supports a culture of trust.

3. Fireground assignments and tactics. When it comes to response, good officers who value trust make sure the individual firefighters on their crews are trained and competent to cover their fireground responsibilities. Officers shouldn't place crews at unreasonable risk by assigning a firefighter lacking demonstrated competence to a task. Crews must trust that decisions are based on this premise. Fireground assignments based on favoritism, discriminatory basis, or non-performance-based factors leads to crews deviating from policy and procedure, second-guessing, and freelancing. When crews trust their officers, they are more likely to become engaged in the strategy, know their officers will accept input based on experience and training, and carry out the plan.

Measuring Trust

We all like to think our firefighters have faith and trust in their officers, especially when we are one of those officers. However, we should be confident enough to know. How can we measure the faith and trust that firefighters have in their officers? Organizational and competitiveness expert Stuart Wells identifies four levels of trust present in organizations. Identifying where your department fits on this scale provides a quick self-assessment.[1] The levels are:

Negotiated Trust: This is the lowest level of trust. At this level, crews operate at the level of that required by personnel rules or policy. Deviation from those rules or policy, however, can occur if it is perceived the rules are arbitrarily applied or officers don't follow them. Crews will not do any more than they are formally required to do and will not provide input.

Conditional Trust: Crews give officers the benefit of the doubt, yet they reserve full judgment based on the officer's behavior. This is a "wait and see" approach. It can also be described that crews are simply waiting for officers to fail and, likewise officers are waiting for crews to fail. When there is a failure to meet expectations on either side, it results in a reduction of trust.

Cooperative Trust: Crews have expectations of their officers and each other but failure to meet those expectations will not result in reduced levels of trust. Crews will assume that the occasional

mistake, lapse in judgment, or error was the result of some misunderstanding and/or miscommunication. Belief is not easily shaken because everyone is operating under the principle of commitment to crew safety and success on the fireground.

Unconditional Trust: This is highest level of trust. Crews rely on the word of officers. Crews also are confident their experience and assessment are valued. Trust is not affected by individual weaknesses. Rather, the officer and crew work to improve individual competence through practice and further training. Officers and crews openly take responsibility for their own actions. Additionally, crews consistently and proactively find ways to add value to station and fireground performance. This is the "gold standard" that every officer and organization should strive to achieve. Crews know the officers will support them both tactically and administratively.

Keep in mind these levels were written for business, where the "occasional mistake, lapse in judgment, or error" doesn't cause serious injury or death. So, unconditional trust is really where your department needs to be.

Objectively determining the level of trust naturally leads to the question of whether and how your fire department culture needs to change. And cultural change isn't just the realm of high-ranking officers. If you've got a crew, or if even one firefighter answers to you and is subject to

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Grilling Fire Safety

Stay fire safe this summer! Follow these grilling safety tips.

3 feet

Only use your grill outside. Keep it at least 3 feet from siding, deck rails and eaves.

3 feet

Keep a 3-foot safe zone around your grill. This will keep kids and pets safe.

1

2

Open your gas grill before lighting.

Keep an eye on your grill, fire pit or patio torches. Don't walk away from them when they are lit.

Clean your grill after each use. This will remove grease that can start a fire.

Place the coals from your grill in a metal can with a lid once they have cooled.

Stay fire safe this summer!
For more information and resources, visit www.usfa.fema.gov.



Events to Celebrate August Birthdays

- 2 — Troy Freeman
- 3 — Steph Hollstein
- 6 — Mike Lysbol
- 6 — Zach Scott
- 19 — Tony Esser
- 23 — Kevin Biery
- 24 — Mark Wohlrab
- 25 — Cody Bowen
- 28 — Marcia Dickenson
- 28 — David Comp
- 29 — Sean Roberts
- 31 — Kris Jorgensen

Board Meetings may be conducted via Zoom Meeting



NWFR

Thurs. August 20
9408 Odell St 61



Policies cont.

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your direction, then, to the maximum extent possible, it's your responsibility to create a culture of trust within your command.

Reference

Wells S. (1997) *From Sage to Artisan: The Nine Roles of the Value-Driven Leader*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue is currently in the process of updating all district policies to align with their vision, missions and values statement.

The district is working with Lexipol, a company that specializes in fire district policy development and training, to assist with the project.

Fire Chief Van der Veen noted that the project is expected to

take from twelve to eighteen months to complete.

As each set of policies is completed and approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners, it will be necessary for members to acknowledge that they have reviewed and comprehend each policy.





4142 Britton Loop Rd.
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Providing quality service for
a safe community



CPR / AED Classes 2020

Class will be held at various fire stations around the district. Check out <https://www.nwfrs.net/resources/classes/> for more information and to reserve your spot.

Donations of nonperishable food items are encouraged but not mandatory. All food donations will be forwarded to local area food banks.

FOR THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY, ALL CPR CLASSES HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE

NWFR Book Recommendation



The latest release from award winning author and speaker, Brené Brown is *Dare to Lead*.

Dare to Lead considers four clear areas of leadership and culture; beginning with vulnerability, considering values, building trust and finally being able to rise from falling and failure.

Brené's style, as with her previous books, is heartfelt, open and concise. This book also features stories from her earlier publications but in a way that helps the reader to gain deeper understanding and clarity. Any follower of Brené's work will be aware of her dedication and expertise in the areas of shame and vulnerability, these are

once again included in this book.

By understanding and developing self-awareness, we are taken on a journey to better relate to others using techniques presented clearly. Brené also shows the reader what can get in the way and cause barriers to "braver leadership and courageous cultures". Another great read!

For more information visit her website at <https://daretolead.brenebrown.com/>

Integrity is choosing courage over comfort;

IT'S CHOOSING WHAT'S RIGHT OVER WHAT'S FUN, FAST, OR EASY; AND IT'S PRACTICING YOUR VALUES, NOT JUST PROFESSING THEM.



Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things.



Fresh Fruit with Cheese and Peppery Nuts



courtesy of bonappetit.com

Ingredients

1/2 cup coarsely chopped nuts
3 TBSP. (or more) extra-virgin oil
1 TBSP. (or more) honey
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
2 tsp. (or more) unseasoned rice vinegar, divided
6 oz. semi-firm, salty cheese
1 1/2 lb. ripe fruit

Recipe Preparation

Combine nuts and oil in a small

skillet and set over medium heat. Cook, stirring often, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and mix in honey; season with salt and lots of pepper. Add 1 tsp. vinegar. Dressing should be sweet and fatty and spiced. Adjust with more oil, honey, salt, pepper, and/or vinegar until your pleased.

Break up the cheese into pieces or thinly slice, as you wish. Cut fruit into 1/4" thick wedges or rounds and place on a platter or large plate. Sprinkle with salt and drizzle remaining 1 tsp. vinegar. Tuck in pieces of cheese; spoon dressing over (heat over low if needed to loosen).

This salad template is all about using whatever's in season to play three key roles: sweet-juicy

fruit, crunchy-salty nuts, and chewy-fatty cheese. We love a mix of clementines, ricotta salata, and pistachios for winter; Bosc or D'Anjou pears, parmesan, and hazelnuts for fall; persimmon, mild blue cheese, and pecans for spring; and figs, honey toasted walnuts, and Manchego for summer. Ideally, let everything sit for 15 minutes before serving, so the fruit juices can mingle with the dressing on the plate. This recipe is from [Where Cooking Begins](#) by Carla Lalli Music.

"I made a version with ripe peaches, a mild blue cheese and pecans. It looks beautiful, tastes amazing and is relatively effortless. Such a great alternative to a cheese board for a dinner party."