

NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE

FIRE DISTRICT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Number: 0400.020.00

Date: 10/21/2011

Area: Personnel

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Subject: Workplace Expectations, Employee Ethics
Standards of Conduct, Personal Activities

Approved:

Policy 0400.020.00

1.0 General

North Whatcom Fire and Rescue expects all employees/members to subscribe to the mission, vision and values and the ethical standards and principles that guide the provision of services to the tax payers and guests of the fire district. North Whatcom Fire and Rescue expects employees to be fair, honest, consistent, and committed to high levels of customer service and professionalism. Anyone who fails to live up to such expectations reflects negatively on the entire fire district work force.

2.0 Purpose

It is the purpose of this policy to identify for all employees/members as well as the employer, the values and ethics that affect the standard of conduct, expectations within the workplace.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all full-time, part-time, regular or temporary employee or member.

4.0 Policy

4.1 Definitions

Workplace Expectations – Employee workplace expectations serve as a roadmap for employee behavior. Workplace expectations set the standard for the behavior/conduct that is expected of every employee in the workplace.

Employee workplace expectations provide employees with a mechanism of mutual accountability, meaning an employee can refer to the workplace expectations when dealing with another employee's troublesome behavior.

Workplace expectations help employees communicate problems in a non-confrontational or threatening manner

Represented Employees – are those employees whose wages, hours and working conditions are covered under a collective bargaining agreement.

Cancels: New

Revised:

Reviewed:

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Non-Represented Employees – are those employees/members whose wages, hours and working conditions are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

A Reasonable Person - a fictional person with an ordinary degree of reason, prudence, care, foresight, or intelligence whose conduct, conclusion, or expectation in relation to a particular circumstance or fact is used as an objective standard by which to measure or determine something (as the existence of negligence).

4.2 Accountability for Workplace Expectations:

- 4.2.1 All employees/members shall review and remain familiar with Policy 0100.0002.00, Organizational Philosophy.
- 4.2.2 All employees/members of the fire district shall be held accountable for their actions.
- 4.2.3 Managers/supervisors shall hold employees who choose not to comply with the workplace expectations provisions of this policy, accountable for their actions.
- 4.2.4 Employees shall be subject to disciplinary action, i.e., counseling/reprimand, up to termination if behaviors do not conform to fire district policy.
- 4.2.5 Failure to comply with the workplace expectations shall be included in the employee's annual performance evaluation.

4.3 Effective and Efficient Performance of Duties:

- 4.3.1 Employees shall report to work ready to perform their job effectively and efficiently.
- 4.3.2 Employees/members shall only use appropriate sick leave when ill and unable to perform their specific duties and responsibilities, when medical/dental appointments require their absence from work, or when caring for an immediate family member suffering from an illness or incapacity. (Immediate family shall include spouse, dependent child or parent as defined in RCW 42.12.26).

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- 4.3.3 Non-Represented employees shall comply with the provisions of the “Employee Handbook” when having to take sick leave due to illness or injury or when caring for an immediate family member.
- 4.3.4 Employees who are represented by union, guild, or other labor organization shall comply with the provisions of their Collective Bargaining Agreement when having to use sick leave.
- 4.3.5 All employees/members are responsible for their job performance.
- 4.3.6 All Employees/members shall perform their job duties and other assigned tasks within the standards set forth for their position, and shall notify their supervisor when backlogs or unexpected work may result in a delay in completing essential tasks.

4.4 Promotion of a Respectful Workplace

- 4.4.1 Employees/members shall treat all employees in the same manner in which they would want to be treated.
- 4.4.2 Employees/members shall not use insulting, threatening, or offensive language in the workplace. Humor, gags, jokes or other behavior that would be offensive to a reasonable person shall not occur at any time.
- 4.4.3 Employees/members when seeking clarification about an issue shall verify the accuracy of the information by asking the source of the information and/or their supervisor before quoting or passing on such information. It is understood that rumor and gossip sabotages the effectiveness of the organization and endangers the ability to work together effectively. It is disrespectful, nonproductive, and a selfishly motivated act that impedes employees from performing their jobs.
- 4.4.4 Employees should expand their workplace perspective from simply performing individual tasks to helping ensure the Fire District’s overall mission is accomplished by giving assistance, encouragement and support to coworkers.

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4.5 Dealing with Workplace Conflict:

- 4.5.1 Employees that have concerns about the actions or alleged actions of a coworker should address the coworker directly about their concerns, rather than complaining to and/or discussing the concerns with other coworkers.
- 4.5.2 Employees/members should recognize that most conflicts can be resolved through good judgment, open and respectful communication, and a willingness to seek compromise.

4.6 Standards of Conduct – General Principles:

- 4.6.1 Employees/members shall apply the principles identified herein when determining whether their professional ethics and conduct is appropriate.
- 4.6.2 Employees/members shall not engage in financial transactions using non-public fire district government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any personal or private interest.
- 4.6.3 Employees/members shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
- 4.6.4 Each employee/member shall respect and adhere to the principles of ethical conduct set forth in applicable laws, policies, and regulations.
- 4.6.5 Employees/members shall not, except as permitted by law, regulation, or policy solicit or accept gifts or other items of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the fire district, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's/member's duties (see 4.7.2 c) below).
- 4.6.6 Employees/members shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
- 4.6.7 Employees/members shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the fire district government.

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- 4.6.8 Employees/members shall not use public office or their position for private gain or personal influence.
- 4.6.9 Employees/members shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
- 4.6.10 Employees/members shall protect and conserve fire district property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
- 4.6.11 Employees/members shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official assigned fire district job duties and responsibilities.
- 4.6.12 Employees/members shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate fire district authorities.
- 4.6.13 Employees/members shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those — such as applicable Federal, State, or local taxes — that are imposed by law.
- 4.6.14 Employees/members shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating these ethical standards.
- 4.6.15 During an employee's/member's workday, an employee/member shall devote 100% of their time, attention, and efforts to the duties and responsibilities of the employee's position in the Fire District service.
- 4.6.16 Employees/members shall not engage in sexual conduct or other inappropriate behavior while on duty or on fire district property to include but not limited to stations, apparatus, other equipment, or general grounds.
- 4.6.17 Employees/members have the right to work in an environment where mutual respect and consideration are shown among all employees and with the public. The Fire District expects that employees shall conduct themselves in a respectful and professional manner in the work place and avoid any behavior that may be construed to be harassing, menacing, demeaning, and/or of a violent nature.

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4.7 Incompatible Personal Activities of Fire District Employees:

- 4.7.1 An employee shall not engage in any off-duty employment or activity that is inconsistent, incompatible or in conflict with the employee's duties in the Fire District service.
- 4.7.2 The Fire Chief determines which activities are inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with duties in the Fire District service. Examples of prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:
- a) The use of Fire District time, facilities, equipment, or supplies for private gain or advantage;
 - b) The use of the badge, uniform, prestige, or influence of an employee's position for private gain or advantage;
 - c) The direct or indirect solicitation or acceptance of any gratuities, loans, gifts, merchandise, meals, beverages, or any other thing of tangible value (\$25.00+) in connection with or resulting from an employee's official position. Nor will employees use their official position, badges, or identification cards to obtain privileges not otherwise available to them;
 - d) The performance of an act when an employee is off duty that may later be subject to direct or indirect control, inspection, review, audit, or enforcement by that employee of the Fire District in the exercise of their Fire District duties.

4.8 Off Duty Employment:

- 4.8.1 Employees/members may engage in off-duty employment that is not inconsistent, incompatible, or in conflict with the employee's duties and responsibilities, in the Fire District service; and that will not negatively affect the performance of the employee/member while in the Fire District Service.

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4.9 Employees/Members Personal Financial Affairs:

4.9.1 Employees/members must ensure that their personal financial affairs are managed to that credit and collection agencies do not have to make use of the offices of the fire district to make collections.

4.10 Political Activities of Fire District Employees/Members:

4.10.1 There are no restrictions on the right of an employee/member to participate off duty in political activities that involve ballot measures that relate to wages, hours, or working conditions.

4.10.2 An employee/member can, when off duty, campaign for or against elected fire district officials or ballot measures.

4.10.3 Employees/members shall not disturb employees or lobby for partisan or nonpartisan initiatives, ballot measures or other political issues during their work periods or workdays.

4.10.4 Employees/members shall not campaign or solicit political contributions during work hours, using public (fire district) telephones or other equipment, or on fire district property; carry or display political material in or on publicly owned vehicles; display or distribute campaign posters, placards or other promotional materials on fire district owned or operated premises; use fire district supplies, equipment or facilities to print, mail, or otherwise produce or distribute campaign materials; or solicit signatures for any initiative, recall or referendum campaign on publicly owned or operated premises. RCW 42.17.130

4.10.5 Employees who are in the Fire District service or who are seeking an elected office will not use the employee's office to influence another person or persons for political purposes.

4.11 Uniform Policy:

4.11.1 Employees/members shall comply with the provisions of Policy 0400.021.00 when wearing the fire district uniform.

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4.12 Employee/Member Privacy

- 4.12.1 The Fire District will not assume any responsibility for any theft or damage to the personal belongings of Fire District employees.
- 4.12.2 Fire District employees are asked to avoid bringing private articles or property to work.
- 4.12.3 Employees should be aware that inspections or searches of an employee's/member's property that is located on the fire district's property may be conducted without advance notice and with probable cause.
- 4.12.4 Employees shall not use a personal lock on company property, unless specifically authorized in writing by the Fire Chief.
- 4.12.5 Should an employee desire to have his/her personal locker secured, the employee/member shall provide the fire district with a spare key or combination listing for all locks used, and the fire district shall retain a copy of the key or combination to all locks that are used by employees in the work place.
- 4.12.6 Employees who do not consent to the inspections described above may be disciplined up to and including immediate termination.

4.13 Use of Fire District Computers, Network, or Connections:

- 4.13.1 All employees/members shall comply with the provisions of Policy 0800.010.00

4.14 Severe Weather and Disasters:

- 4.14.1 Due to the essential public need for fire district response during all times, especially during severe weather and disasters, all uniformed employee/members are expected that they have the capability to report to scheduled work, call back and/or standby regardless of conditions.

4.15 Injury/Illness reporting:

- 4.15.1 All employee/members are encouraged to notify the fire district when it becomes known that illness or injury would prevent the employee from accomplishing their duties and responsibilities.

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4.15.2 At a minimum, the employee/member shall notify the fire district no later than one hour prior to being expected to report for their assigned duty if that employee/member is ill or injured and unable to work.

5.0 Procedures (Optional)

6.0 Control Mechanisms

6.1 Annual Review of Policy

- 6.1.1 The Fire Chief shall be responsible for implementation and enforcement of this policy.
- 6.1.2 The Fire Chief and/or his/her designee shall review, amend, and/or adjust this policy as needed.
- 6.1.3 The Board of Fire Commissioners shall review this policy on an annual basis.

7.0 References

Approved:	
	Chairman, Board of Fire Commissioners North Whatcom Fire & Rescue
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