



MASON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT #4

TITLE: WORKPLACE ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

CHAPTER: 2000 NUMBER: 2400 APPROVED: 10-07-2008

APPROVED: Signature on file Bob Burbridge, Chief

General Prohibition of Discriminatory Workplace Harassment

The Fire District firmly believes that all persons are entitled to be treated with respect at all times, and is committed to providing a workplace free of discrimination in any form. Each member has the right to work in a work environment that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices. Discriminatory workplace harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The purpose of This Policy is to clearly establish the Fire District's commitment to provide a work environment free from harassment, to define discriminatory workplace harassment, and to set forth the procedure for investigating and resolving internal complaints of harassment. Because of the tremendous importance of a workplace free from any form of harassment, it is the responsibility of every member to cooperate with, and assist in the implementation of this policy.

Discriminatory conduct or harassment on the basis of an member's gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital and family status, medical condition, disability, Vietnam-era or veteran's special disability status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law is a violation of This Policy. Harassment has serious consequences not only for the members involved, but also for the entire Fire District.

By the term "harassment," the Fire District means unwelcome, annoying or offensive conduct directed at another member such as threats, demands, requests, pursuit, teasing, abuse, taunts, insults, heckling, torment or other similar behavior. The Fire District takes a **zero tolerance** approach and will not tolerate such conduct or harassment. Member conduct in direct violation of This Policy or the spirit of This Policy will be subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination.

Each member of management is responsible for creating an atmosphere free from harassment, sexual or otherwise. Members who feel they are being harassed or discriminated against, should file a complaint by using the procedures outlined in This Policy.

Definitions



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For purposes of clarification, harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors and conduct:

1. **Verbal Harassment.** Epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, propositioning, or otherwise offensive words or comments on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital and family status, medical condition, disability, Vietnam-era or veteran's special disability status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law, whether made in general, directed to an individual, or to a group of people regardless of whether the behavior was intended to harass. This includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate sexually oriented comments on appearance, including dress or physical features, sexual rumors, code words, and race oriented stories.

2. **Physical Harassment.** Assault, impeding or blocking movement, leering, or the physical interference with normal work, privacy or movement when directed at an individual on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital and family status, medical condition, disability, Vietnam-era or veteran's special disability status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. This includes pinching, patting, grabbing, inappropriate behavior in or near bathrooms, sleeping facilities and eating areas, or making explicit or implied threats or promises in return for submission to physical acts.

3. **Visual Forms of Harassment.** Derogatory, prejudicial, stereotypical or otherwise offensive posters, photographs, cartoons, notes, bulletins, drawings or pictures on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital and family status, medical condition, disability, Vietnam-era or veteran's special disability status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. This applies to both posted material and material maintained in or on Fire District property, equipment or a member's personal property in the workplace.

4. **Sexual Harassment.** Unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (verbal or physical) when: 1) submission to or rejection of This conduct by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting hiring, evaluation, promotion or other aspects of employment with the Fire District; and 2) This conduct substantially interferes with an individual's membership in the Fire District or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: unwanted sexual advances; demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment, such as promotions or advancement, or continued membership in the Fire District; repeated sexual jokes, flirtations, advances or propositions; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; graphic, verbal commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling, touching, pinching,



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assault, coerced sexual acts or suggestive insulting, obscene comments or gestures; and display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

The above examples are for illustrative purposes only. For such behavior to qualify as sexual harassment, it must be sufficiently severe or pervasive so as to unreasonably interfere with a member's terms, conditions or privileges of District membership or to create a hostile working environment. HOWEVER, even though a behavior listed above may not qualify as "sexual harassment" under relevant law, the Fire District may treat such conduct as inappropriate behavior and apply discipline, up to and including termination.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is an unlawful employment practice under federal law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and state law (Washington State Law against Discrimination, 49.60 RCW). Sexual harassment is inappropriate, offensive and illegal and will not be tolerated by The Fire District. The Fire District has and will continue to take an affirmative role in protecting its employees from sexual harassment.

Responsibilities for the Work Environment

Management

Management and supervisory personnel have an affirmative duty under This Policy to protect individuals from discriminatory workplace harassment. They are responsible for making themselves aware of the potential for unlawful harassment behavior within their work unit or District and ensuring a work environment free from harassing conduct. Due to the nature of the supervisory/management relationship, individuals in this case are generally perceived to have a great degree of power over those they directly or indirectly supervise. Therefore, the behavior and conduct of supervisory personnel will be judged more severely and should be professional at all times.

Additionally, management and supervisory personnel are discouraged from becoming romantically involved with those employees with whom they have a direct reporting relationship. If a romantic relationship develops between a supervisor and their employee, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to report such relationship to the Fire Chief. In the case of the Fire Chief, s/he should report the relationship directly to the Supervisor.

Members

Members have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a professional, business-like manner at all times in the work place and to assist management in providing a work environment free of discriminatory workplace harassment. If a member, supervisor or manager expresses a concern



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that your behavior may have violated this policy, please respect his/her concern. Regardless of your intent, how others interpret your behavior is important.

Complaint Procedures

All members should feel free to make a complaint or discuss this policy directly with their immediate supervisor, Fire Chief Officer or the Fire Chief. If the complaint or concern involves the Fire Chief, then the member should take their concern directly to the Supervisor.

In general, if you feel that you have experienced any job-related harassment based on your gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital and family status, medical condition, disability, Vietnam-era or veteran's special disability status or status in any other legally protected group, you must follow these complaint procedures:

1. **Informal Resolution.** If you are comfortable discussing the matter with the person who you feel is violating This Policy, then you should discuss the matter with him/her. If you are not comfortable doing this or you do not believe it will cause the conduct to stop, you may bypass this step and move to the next step.

2. **Initial Report.** You should bring the matter to the attention of your immediate supervisor as soon as the problem arises. If you believe that it would not be appropriate to discuss the matter with your immediate supervisor, or if your supervisor does not respond to your report, or if you are uncomfortable discussing the issue with your supervisor, you may bypass your immediate supervisor and report it directly to the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief should be aware of any complaint under This Policy. If the matter involves the Fire Chief, then you should report it directly to the Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

3. **Investigation.** If not appropriately resolved at an earlier step in this process, the Fire District will investigate all reports of harassment. Any reports or complaints will be promptly investigated and kept confidential to the extent possible consistent with the Fire District's need to investigate the complaint and address the situation. A thorough investigation can take several weeks in some cases. You may, at any time, inquire about the status of the investigation.

4. **Findings.** The findings and/or outcome of the investigation will, under most circumstances, be shared in general terms with the complaining party and the alleged harasser.

Disciplinary Measures

If an investigation reasonably indicated that a member did engage in discriminatory workplace harassment of a co-member, customer, member of the public or any other person having business with the Fire District, the offending party will be subject to disciplinary action (up to and



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including termination) or other appropriate remedies as determined by management. The level of disciplinary action will be dependent on the nature and severity of the harassment.

A complaint or report that This Policy has been violated is a serious matter. Dishonest complaints or reports are also against This Policy and the Fire District will take appropriate disciplinary action if its investigation indicates that deliberately dishonest and bad faith accusations have been made.

Prohibition of Retaliation

Retaliation in any manner against a person for filing a harassment charge or initiating a harassment complaint, testifying in an investigation, providing information or assisting in an investigation, is expressly prohibited and subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. The Fire District will endeavor to take reasonable steps to protect the victim from any retaliation as a result of communicating a complaint of discriminatory workplace harassment.

Importance of Complaint Procedures

The complaint procedures outlined in this Policy constitutes the approved manner for a member to report and obtain proper resolution of potential violations of this Non-Harassment Policy. Please understand that failure to use this complaint procedure may bar a member from bringing a claim for harassment or retaliation against the Fire District.