



RUSSELLVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
POLICY MANUAL

Policy Number:
Section:
Original Date:
Revised Date:

PURPOSE

This policy establishes the responsibility and procedures for enforcing the rules, regulations, and policies of the city and the department.

Members are responsible for following the rules and policies of the City and the Fire Department. They are also responsible for reporting violations of the same.

POLICY

The officer in charge of a company or a platoon shall supervise the work of their employees and see that it is properly performed. They shall see that all rules and orders are obeyed. They shall report all misconduct or incompetency requiring disciplinary action to their superiors.

Officers are expected to treat their subordinates in a fair and impartial manner at all times. Prejudice for any reason will not be tolerated.

Officers are expected to set an example to their subordinates in the matter of due regard and respect for the rules, regulations, and policies and all matters pertaining to proper discipline.

It is the duty of every officer to develop their subordinates so they can best serve the Fire Department. Instruction and disciplinary action are not primarily intended to be punitive, but rather to maintain the efficiency and integrity of City service. The nature and severity of the offense and the employee's prior record shall be considered. It is the responsibility of each supervisor and department head to evaluate thoroughly the circumstances and facts as objective as possible and then apply the most suitable form of discipline.

When subordinates actions are less than expected for a member of the Fire Department, one of the following actions and procedures may be followed. In selecting the proper action, the officer should decide which action would work best for this member, in this situation. The officer must also consider what is in the best interest of the Public, the City, and the Fire Department. Officers must try to be consistent in their actions towards all members. Discussion with other officers and superiors, as confidentiality allows, may be beneficial.

The procedures are divided into two categories; Instructive Actions and Disciplinary Actions.

Instructive Actions: There are two types of Instructive Actions: corrections and counseling.

Corrections: When an officer or member notices an action or condition that creates a hazard or otherwise inhibits good order and efficiency, a correction may be given. Corrections are instructions, directions, demonstrations and/or orders that immediately correct an improper action or condition.

Approved

Fire Chief

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The forcefulness of the correction is dependent upon the situation. In situations where the risk of injury or property damage is high, the correction may be forceful and more often take the form of a direct order. Examples of these situations include: Fire Department responses, high risk training evolutions, threats of violence, and imminent injury to persons or property. During less critical situations, the correction may be more congenial and take the form of instructions, directions, and/or demonstrations.

Officers may limit their actions to the correction only and no documentation is required. However, in the event of multiple minor occurrences or more severe misconduct or incompetence, the officer may also add additional actions.

Employee Counseling: All employees should be informed of their on the job performance as often as necessary but at least once each year following the employee's annual evaluation.

The interview is an effort to encourage the supervisor to communicate forthrightly to a subordinate his/her reactions to the employee's performance and to offer positive assistance in remedying any shortcomings in the employee's job performance. (*Civil Service Commission, Rules and Regulations*)

The counseling session is an extremely useful tool to correct inefficiency and incompetence. It may also be used to correct minor instances of misconduct. The counseling session should be used well in advance of employee evaluations when an unsatisfactory evaluation is being contemplated.

The counseling session should be held in private. During the session, the officer and the subordinate should work together to develop a plan for the correction or modification of the behavior. The plan should contain the following:

- Identify the improper behavior as specifically as possible
- What is the standard (rule, regulation, policy)
- What training is needed and will be provided
- What is expected (level of proficiency)
- What timetable will be met
- What will happen if change is not made

The plan should be in writing and signed by the officer and the member. Both parties should hold a copy. The officer should hold his copy of the plan until the timetable is met (usually not past the current evaluation cycle). If the behavior is not corrected, the officer's copy should be held as documentation for poor evaluation or further disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action: A point may come when the member's behavior cannot be made compatible with the requirements of the Fire Department. At other times, an act or series of acts may be so severe, blatant, or willful in nature that instructive actions are not appropriate. The officer shall recommend disciplinary action.

The types of Disciplinary Action are:

- Oral Reprimand
- Written Reprimand
- Suspension
- Demotion
- Discharge

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An elaboration of each type of disciplinary action is found in the *Civil Service Commission, Rules and Regulations*.

The officer recommending disciplinary action shall write a written report to the Fire Chief. This report should contain:

- Detailed description of the actions or events leading to the recommendation for disciplinary action
- Witnesses to these actions or events
- Specific rule or regulation violated as described in the *Civil Service Commission, Rules and Regulations*
- Specific policy or order violated
- All documentation of relevant previous instructive or disciplinary actions

This report shall be hand carried to the member's Battalion Chief. Discussions between the officer and Battalion Chief may occur at this time and the recommendations may be modified or withdrawn from the originator. The chief officer may request additional reports from the accused or witnesses.

The members Battalion Chief shall investigate the violations. The investigator may interview the accused and witnesses and review previous relevant conduct and competency. The member's Battalion Chief may issue a reprimand (oral or written), on appropriate forms provided by the administration, or may recommend a more severe action to the Fire Chief. A report of the findings shall be made to the Fire Chief.

The Fire Chief or designee shall review the violations. If actions greater than written reprimand is recommended, the Fire Chief may order additional investigation and investigators. The Fire Chief is not bound by the recommendations and may increase or reduce the penalty. If the Fire Chief is contemplating a disciplinary action greater than a written reprimand, the Fire Chief shall meet with the employee as required in *Civil Service Commission, Rules and Regulations*.

The Fire Chief shall notify the disciplined member in writing. The notification should include:

- The nature of the violation
- The Disciplinary Action order (effective dates, etc.)
- The effect this action will have on the member's career (retention times, promotion, and evaluation penalties)
- Right to appeal and description of the appeals process
- Statement of probably further disciplinary action upon report of other misconduct or incompetence

All reports of misconduct or incompetence from sources outside the department shall be investigated as directed by the Fire Chief. Procedures shall be followed as described in the *Civil Service Commission, Rules and Regulations*.

Approved

Fire Chief