



*Our residents are owed professional service, delivered by professional firefighters, representing professional organizations*

## **BUILDING BLOCKS of the Professional Volunteer Fire Department:**

### **1. AWARENESS**

- Aware of our responsibilities as firefighters & department members - on and off duty
- Aware that we live in a much different world today & everyone is watching us
- Be mindful that perception is reality in people's minds

### **2. THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER**

- We can't get the trucks out the door if we can't get the right people to come in the door
- Consider all new ideas for recruitment & retention. What do we have to lose?
- Avoid the ship is sinking advertisement; create a warm, welcoming firehouse atmosphere
- Show a professional image from the start: When someone shows up expressing an interest in joining, have an organized, smooth running system in place to handle the new recruit process. Be sure all members are familiar with it
- Keep your FD web site and social media presence professional looking and up to date
- Meet with candidates to provide clear expectations and explain the benefits of being a member of your fire department and a member of the extended fire service family
- Ensure the candidates are the right fit for your organization and our fire service
- During the entire onboarding process continue to interact and communicate with the candidate(s) to keep them engaged, informed and interested

### **3. THE NEW MEMBER**

- Truly welcome them into your fire service family and get to know them
- Establish a formal orientation program that reinforces clear expectations and provides an honest introduction to your volunteer fire department and the fire service

### **4. MENTORING & MUTUAL RESPECT**

- Embrace mentoring as an informal orientation program - everyone can be a mentor
- Mutual respect among the generations is paramount! Give respect to earn respect!
- Help new members grow. The job of an old (senior) firefighter is to help the young firefighter become an old (senior) firefighter. Show them the way! New members...listen!

### **5. DRILLS AND TRAINING**

- Training never stops and needs to be embraced by all members and tenures
- The professional volunteer fire department delivers training that is organized, regular, pertinent and makes the best use of the members' time - and holds them accountable
- A quality training program shapes quality members & contributes to a professional image

### **6. PREPAREDNESS**

- Be prepared to rise to the level expected of you - whatever your tenure, title or role
- Put a "playbook" together spanning the operational as well as the administrative side of the organization. Clearly define membership duties, on scene responsibilities, operational procedures and best practices in the firehouse as well as on the incident scene be a student of the playbook
- Embrace a pre-plan program that clearly dispenses the information to the membership
- Implement and enforce comprehensive driver training programs and safe driving practices
- Embrace physical fitness and health and wellness programs - prepared means fit to serve
- Be prepared by staying on top of current developments and events in the fire service

**"Being a professional firefighter has nothing to do with earning a paycheck - but has everything to do with attitude, appearance, commitment and dedication."**



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## 7. APPEARANCE

- Let's be honest. How we dress can have a definite impact on our professional image and reputation
- Let's be honest: If we want to be thought of like a professional we should look like a professional
  - *Side benefit: Looking professional also inspires confidence*
- Respect our profession by avoiding t-shirts with political, profane, sexist, sexual, discriminatory or controversial messages and images.
- A professional leads by example and dresses and gears up appropriately in the performance of their duty

## 8. SOCIAL MEDIA

- Both a benefit and a burden. Don't ban it - set expectations and use it appropriately
- Embrace it as a 'network for good' and implement solid policies that allow its use
- Understand that members' off-duty and non-FD related posts still reflect on the department impact reputation
- ***Professionals do not troll!***

## 9. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SOCIAL FITNESS

- Every call response and public interaction provides an opportunity to display your department's positive professional image or lack of it. Be nice to each other - genuine kindness is sorely lacking today
- Have real empathy for the situation the customer is dealing with, no matter how trivial it may seem to you
- Other people's worst day should be the professional volunteer firefighter's finest day
- Let our iconic Maltese cross stand as a testament that good people still exist

## 10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The Professional Volunteer Fire Department embraces both personal as well as organizational professional development programs & the Professional Volunteer Firefighter seeks out development opportunities as well
- The success of any organization largely depends on its leader's ability to motivate, inspire, train and truly engage the membership. Remember, it's not the cards you're dealt, it's how you play your hand
- Before a volunteer firefighter is elected or appointed to an officer position - the fire department has an obligation to properly prepare them to be successful for the challenges that await
- However the new officer has a duty and obligation to accept the responsibility that comes with the rank and title, and to also seek out and take advantage of opportunities to improve their leadership skills
- Understand the skills that get an officer elected or appointed will most likely not be the same skills that will make them successful as an officer or sustain them in office - natural talent and competence are never enough
- Embrace the ownership mentality throughout your fire service journey, no matter your title, tenure or role. No job is beneath you and all are important to your department's overall success. Remember, *"If you are going to achieve excellence in the big things, you develop the habit in little matters"*

## 11. HISTORY, HERITAGE AND BUILDING FIRE DEPARTMENT PRIDE

- Celebrate and share our great fire service history, people, stories and traditions
- Celebrate and share your great fire departments history, people, stories, and traditions
- You stand on the shoulders of those who came before. As long as we speak their names and tell their stories, they have never really left us
- ***Know your why!***
- Make the fire station a 'true' fire house by welcoming a diverse team, setting the tone for acceptable behavior, celebrating and sharing members' accomplishments and contributions inside as well as outside the fire house
- Our firefighters and our firehouses stand as a beacon of strength and hope to our communities -
- Stand ready to deliver on that image - competently, compassionately, calmly and professionally

## LAY THE FOUNDATION OF A PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT...

- That people want to join and be part of and that firefighters want to stay involved with
- That our young members' parents feel comfortable sending them to
- That is staffed by members who share a common goal of delivering dedicated, competent and honorable service
- That former members can visit and look back on with pride and that the community embraces and supports
- That is staffed by professional volunteers!