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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** |
| **SOG Number:** |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** |

**Harassment Policy**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Purpose:**

To provide for a healthy environment for all members of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in regards to sexual, racial, or other types of harassment, and to provide procedures for reporting, investigation, and resolution of complaints of harassment, sexual or otherwise

**Procedure:**

It is the policy of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department that all members have the right to work in an environment free from all forms of harassment. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department does not condone, nor will it tolerate, any type of harassment directed towards its members. Therefore the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department will take direct and immediate action to prevent such behavior and to remedy all reported instances of harassment, sexual or otherwise.

Prohibited Activity

* No member shall either explicitly or implicitly ridicule, mock, deride, or belittle any other member of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department.
	+ Members shall not make offensive or derogatory comments based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin either directly or indirectly to another member. Such harassment is a prohibited form of discrimination under Pennsylvania State and Federal employment laws and is also considered misconduct within the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department and is subject to disciplinary actions.
	+ Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions regarding the offended party’s status or position within the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department. Sexual harassment can also occur if such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a member’s ability to perform his/her duties due to the creation of a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment.
* Member’s Responsibilities
	+ The Fire Chief or his/her designee shall be responsible for preventing acts of harassment within the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:
		- Monitoring the work environment on a regular basis for signs that harassment may be occurring
		- Informing all members on the types of behaviors prohibited by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department and the procedures involved for reporting and resolving complaints of harassment
		- Stopping any observed acts of harassment and taking appropriate steps to intervene when suspected harassment is or has occurred.
* The Fire Chief or his / her designee has the responsibility to assist any member of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department who wishes to file a complaint of harassment in documenting and filing such a complaint.
* Each member of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department is responsible for assisting in the prevention of harassment through the following acts
	+ Retraining from participation in, or encouragement of, such activities that could be perceived as harassment
	+ Reporting acts of harassment to an officer
	+ Encouraging a member who confides that he/she is being harassed to report these acts to an officer
* In the event of a complaint involving harassment, neither party shall make any statements to the press or other outside agency (except legal counsel) until such time that the initial investigation has been completed

**Failure to take action to stop known harassment shall be grounds for disciplinary action.**

* Complaint Procedures:
	+ Members encountering harassment shall tell the person that his / her actions are unwelcome and/or offensive. If the behavior persists, the member shall document all incidents of harassment in order to provide the full basis for an investigation and pending disciplinary action.
	+ My member who things he / she is being harassed shall report the incident(s) to the Fire Chief or his / her designee as soon as possible. My delay in reporting an incident involving suspected harassment can undermine the investigation of said incident.
	+ The Fire Chief or his / her designee will document the incident in question, including in such documentation any and all written or other evidence gathered by the complainant.
	+ Once the complaint has been received and documented an internal investigation shall take place, with both parties being given ample opportunity to present their respective cases before any action is taken. The investigation shall include a determination whether other members are being harassed by the person involved, and whether any other members participated in, encouraged, or witnessed the incident(s).
	+ The Fire Chief shall inform both parties of the results of the investigation in writing within 25 days of the complaint.
	+ There shall be no retaliation against any member for filing a harassment complaint, assisting in the subsequent investigation, or acting as a witness for or against either party involved in the complaint.
	+ Either party may file a grievance/appeal in accordance with the By-Laws and/or Standard Operating Guideline of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department if they disagree with the findings and/or actions resulting from the initial investigation. The Fire Chief shall make all documentation available to both parties in case of an appeal.
	+ This policy does not preclude nor supersede any member from filing a harassment complaint or grievance with any appropriate outside agency.

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

West Redding (CT) VFD – GOG 2-A-206 Developed/Revised/Reviewed by VFIS ETC