

Hurricane Fire & Rescue

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The Hurricane Fire & Rescue Way

Introduction

Hurricane Fire & Rescue is a well-managed organization. Its leadership is committed to providing excellent service and has encouraged efforts to improve service quality in all Hurricane Fire & Rescue areas. This approach has allowed Hurricane Fire & Rescue to positively address our human and physical resources and has supported an environment that encourages excellence.

The department a unique organization, not just within the fire service, but compared to most small organizations. Explaining our philosophy is not simple. "The Hurricane Way" was developed with the intent of describing the organization's philosophy. It is also intended to be perspective – that is, to describe how we would like our organization to be. It is not intended to be a management procedure covering how we should act, but rather a document that describes expectations for positive, constructive interaction. It also sets forth the standards or ideals we, as an organization are dedicated to achieving.

When describing any guiding set of principles or underlying beliefs, concepts or attitudes, it is difficult not to sound idealistic. This is just as true in trying to explain our organization's philosophy. As an organization, we prize excellence. We are a group with selective members and everyone that is a member has to want to belong. If individuals choose to belong, there are expectations and standards of behavior that are not optional. We, individually and collectively, care about the well being of our fellow members and are concerned with preserving the well being of our organization, because it serves the common good of the members and our customers – the public.

Executive Summary

Hurricane Fire & Rescue is a leader in its approach to service delivery and personnel philosophy. This document was prepared by members of the organization to summarize the philosophy of this exceptional group of people. "The Hurricane Way" is intended to guide the behavior of all current and future members to ensure that we continue to reinforce the organization's philosophy in our day-to-day interactions with each other and the public we serve. By setting fourth these tenets, we have a standard by which to measure our personnel and organizational behavior and to provide us with a model of behavior.

Our goal is to constantly provide the best possible service to the citizens of Hurricane and surrounding communities. We are here to protect our community. The organization exists to serve the citizens of the community. The philosophy described in this document is intended to maximize our ability to consistently achieve this goal.

"The Hurricane Way" is founded on the fundamental principal that our members are the foundation of this organization. The organization can be no better or stronger than its members. Being a member of Hurricane Fire & Rescue is more than just a job; it includes a commitment to other members and the citizens of Hurricane. This commitment must be backed with individual responsibility. Each member is responsible for his or her own performance and is accountable for his or her own actions. Each also has responsibilities to the public and to other members. Personal respect and individual integrity are essential ingredients of a positive unified work environment and a healthy organization.

A positive work environment is maintained by commitment and discipline, preferably self-discipline. Members are expected to manage their own behavior in a manner that conforms to the policies of the organization and reflects the philosophy of Hurricane Fire & Rescue. In the situations where self-discipline breaks down, disciplinary action must be imposed. Punitive action should preferably only be used in conjunction with other corrective measures designed to resolve the problem. The organization has a responsibility to help members "get back" or re-enter the organization after disciplinary action, as long as the members are willing to put fourth a sincere effort to help themselves.

Leaders and supervisors play important roles in making the organization's philosophy work. Positive motivation is much more effective in guiding members to be productive than simply identifying and punishing negative behavior or performance. Positive behavior and performance should be recognized at every opportunity. A supervisor's job includes recognizing and rewarding positive actions.

Leadership is critical in maintaining the high standards of performance and the positive image of the organization within the community and emergency services. Leadership responsibility, whether formal or informal, is a determining factor in

the overall effectiveness and well being of the Organization. All department leaders should share their expectations up front with people for whom they are responsible, and stress the accountability of each member. Those expectations need to be realistic and in concert with the overall expectations of the organization.

Each member must accept the responsibility associated with maintaining our environment, delivery of quality service, and cultivating change and improvements in the future. This requires a high level of commitment by all involved to make it effective. It demands dedication to focusing on the best interests of the organization and the public we serve.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue recognizes that it is through the process of considering a number of different views that the best solutions are usually developed. Hurricane Fire & Rescue provides opportunities for members to channel concerns, criticisms, and complaints within the structure of the organization.

True commitment requires loyalty to the organization. Member commitment is easy during the good times, but is truly tested during difficult times. Hurricane Fire & Rescue is not perfect, but it is up to us to strive to make it better. Members are responsible for the organization and it can only be as good as we are willing to commit to making it. Hurricane Fire & Rescue is not static; it is constantly changing and evolving. Hurricane Fire & Rescue has made the commitment to making this change a positive and healthy experience for our members and the public.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue's philosophy is not intended to smother internal disagreement or to stifle individuality. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the organization can remain committed to our mission to serve the public and at the same time improve the capability of our members. We must be able to recognize organizational problems and imperfections as opportunities to continue to improve, and not dwell on them to the point of missing the other positive aspects of the organization.

The responsibility to learn and practice this philosophy lies with each individual. Members make a conscious choice to belong. With this membership must come a commitment to excellence, both internally and externally? It is this positive commitment that has made us what we are today, and through constant assessment and change, will sustain us in the future.

**The “Hurricane Way” defines the organization’s personnel
Philosophy and culture.**

It includes:

1. Providing the best service to customers.
2. Providing the best support to members.
3. Members fitting certain department characteristics.
4. Managing change/Always improving.
5. Members being responsible for the organization.
6. Promoting and Supporting the “Hurricane Way”.
7. Passing on tradition and leaving no one behind.

Service and members are:

- a. Quick
- b. Skillful
- c. Caring
- d. Standard
- e. Professional
- f. Resourceful

Support includes:

- a. Opportunity for advancement.
- b. Being advocates for each other.
- c. Second chance management.
- d. Equality, irrespective of rank or status.
- e. Appropriate rehabilitation.
- f. Courteous and respectful treatment of all members.
- g. Health, fitness, and medical support.
- h. High safety concern.
- i. Equipment/technology
- j. On-going education and training opportunities

Characteristics include:

- a. Smart.
- b. Unique individual / special differences.
- c. On-going desire to be a member.
- d. Self-discipline / self-development = self-respect / self-pride.
- e. Understanding that conduct off duty can affect members.
- f. Committed / accountable.
- g. Humble.
- h. Skilled.
- i. Committed to being healthy and physically fit.
- j. Cooperative / team player
- k. Inclined to coordinate / lead everywhere at every level.
- l. Positive / constructive.
- m. No sniveling.
- n. No harassing other members maliciously.
- o. Always helpful.
- p. Nice.

We should:

- a. Consider change as a regular event / well-managed process.
- b. Help other members adapt to change.
- c. Live and promote the "Hurricane Way".
- d. Maintain problem-solving environment.
- e. Always improve / always care.
- f. Seek opportunities.
- g. Admit when change has not worked and change back, or again, if necessary.
- h. Plan and change creatively / actively.
- i. Allow for timing and sharing ideas.
- j. Communicate change.
- k. Support the department's "change environment".
- l. Process better ways, disagreements, or complaints, appropriately through the system.

Remember that:

- a. Members are responsible for managing their affairs.
- b. Members do not exploit negative times.
- c. Members do not snivel about "they" – we are "they".
- d. Members do not reinforce negative attitudes and/or behaviors.
- e. Members lose if inside atmosphere is awful.
- f. If the department is to fail, it will do so from inside, not outside.
- g. Members must attempt to stop bad things from happening.
- h. Members do not bailout on other members.
- i. All members are equally important.

- j. Good times last only as long as members work at it.
- k. Members do not leave their “wounded or dead” behind.
- l. Our reputations start when we do, so we should be concerned about it from the start.
- m. Members’ actions establish the department’s future.
- n. Members protect/direct/mold/nurture the young and respect the old.
- o. Members inherit what previous members produced.
- p. The department’s past - learn from it.
- q. The department’s today - enjoy it.
- r. The department’s future - plan for it.
- s. The “Hurricane Way” is permanent and continuous.

Section One, Making the Commitment:

Being a member of Hurricane Fire & Rescue is more than just a job, it includes a commitment to others and the citizens of Hurricane.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue is made up of members from various economic and social backgrounds. We have in common a sincere desire to serve the citizens of Hurricane. We are a family of professionals, dedicated to excellence in meeting our mission. We have all committed ourselves to using our training and capabilities to protect the public at all times. Providing exceptional service is a far cry from accepting “good enough” performance. We strive for excellence in literally every contact with our customers, whether inside or outside the organization. This document describes the philosophy of Hurricane Fire & Rescue and is intended to communicate to existing and new members the expectations of the organization and of one another. It also lays the foundation for the way members are treated in the system, expectations for behavior and performance, guidelines for leadership, and the general approach that all supervisors will use when interacting with our members. This document is not intended to be offensive to any member, but rather to clearly communicate certain expectations that, we may or may not have been exposed to before.

There is no doubt that the most important resource in the organization is its members, each and every one of them. It has been said that when a small organization grows to a point that it is considered large, it loses its individuality. In other words, the individual member becomes less known in the system, and therefore less important. This does not have to be, and is absolutely not acceptable at Hurricane Fire & Rescue. No matter what position an individual fills in the organization, he or she is considered important and is to be treated as such.

This document exists for all members of Hurricane Fire & Rescue. Read it carefully. It will also be explained to you in detail. You will be asked to accept this philosophy as the general description of the way we want the system to operate,

the way we are expected to act, and the way we expect to be treated. Every organization has a “Way” of operating. This is the “Hurricane Way”.

Section Two Being Responsible for Ourselves and each Other:

Each individual member of Hurricane Fire & Rescue is responsible and accountable for his / her own actions, and to some extent, for the well being of other members.

It is well understood that we are not going to deal much better with people outside the organization than we do with each other inside the organization. There are four behaviors that need to be practiced on a daily basis.

They are:

1. Consideration: Be considerate of one another’s values, ideals, possessions, feelings, etc.
2. Discretion: Be discrete in the things we say and do to each other.
3. Acceptance: Accept the differences in one another. These are differences that make us stronger as a family and better able to serve the needs of our diverse community.
4. Unity: Value the unity of the organization, not only in good times, but in difficult times as well.

All members of Hurricane Fire & Rescue are expected to practice these behaviors throughout their careers. The effectiveness of the group cannot be jeopardized by petty interpersonal conflicts that contribute nothing to the mission of the organization.

Members have a right to be different, as long as their behavior, appearance, and job performance are not in conflict with the policies and organizational culture. Honoring and respecting individual and cultural diversity is critical in our organization and society in general. Being flexible and non-judgmental are keys to developing heightened levels of acceptance within the organization. However, a member’s individualism may not be acceptable if it causes a significant distraction for the group.

Members are provided with training, equipment, procedures, leadership, supervision, and feedback necessary to prepare and guide them, but the bottom line is that each member is responsible for his / her own performance.

Each member’s stature in the organization will be reinforced by his / her conduct and performance. No system can overcome a particular member’s lack of personal respect for himself / herself or respect for others. To simplify this statement, you will only receive the respect that you earn, no matter what your formal position in the organization.

Section Three: Being Self-Disciplined

Self-discipline is the foundation for managing behavior. Imposed discipline, when necessary, should be designed to correct the situation and return the member to a positive, productive and healthy position in the organization.

Once established, a positive work environment is maintained by commitment and discipline, preferably self-discipline. Members are expected to manage their own behavior in a manner that conforms to the policies of Hurricane Fire & Rescue, and in essence, requires very little supervision. However, they are also expected to follow the instructions given them by their supervisors in a cooperative, positive manner.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue realizes that members will be faced with personal, and/or work-related problems during their careers. When this occurs, they are expected to seek the assistance necessary to return them to a positive, productive life. It is important to remember that professionals do not let personal problems interfere with their performance. They recognize problems, address them, and correct them.

It is unacceptable for a member to use illegal substances on or off duty. **HURRICANE FIRE & RESCUE MEMBERS DO NOT DO DRUGS PERIOD!** Abuse of alcohol, prescription drugs, or any substances, that over a period of time can be detrimental, is simply not appropriate conduct. The unauthorized use of alcohol, or the use, sale, purchase or possession of a controlled substance at any Hurricane Fire & Rescue worksite is absolutely prohibited, and may result in the dismissal of those involved. This policy is not in place to dismiss members, but rather to send a clear message throughout the organization that these acts are unacceptable and so that nobody will violate the rule.

Another critical issue in the overall effectiveness of the organization and the well being of all members is a sincere concern for one another's welfare. This is difficult to maintain unless everyone understands its importance. We simply cannot be effective in serving the public if we cannot cooperate with each other. Verbal abuse, malicious actions, and physical fighting with fellow members have no place at Hurricane Fire & Rescue.

Disciplinary actions should be corrective, progressive and lawful. Supervisor's recommendations for disciplinary actions should match organizational expectations, and their approach should follow the established discipline procedure. Department supervisors are to use punitive disciplinary action only when absolutely necessary to solve a problem. Punitive action should only be used for isolated, serious violations, or for a series of problems in which other tools have not been effective. Also, punitive action should only be used in conjunction with other corrective measures designed to resolve the problem. In those situations where self-discipline breaks down and discipline must be

imposed, the system will either improve, based upon the corrective action taken, or will be damaged by the scars left upon the members involved in the ordeal.

Decisions relating to disciplinary actions are high-risk decisions and are subject to review internally and externally. They are reviewed by the member's directly involved, other members of the organization who are not involved at all, peers, and supervisor's above the level that is taking the action, and perhaps the media and the public. Mitigating circumstances should always be considered before a final decision is made on a disciplinary matter. A standard problem solving approach can be taken in most situations involving misconduct or poor performance, and in doing so the problem should be identified before a solution is developed. In other words "avoid the ready-fire-aim approach" to discipline.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue owes it to the members to keep disciplinary proceedings confidential. This can avoid unnecessary embarrassment to the member and the organization. Confidential in this sense does not mean that no one will ever find out about the incident, but only that investigators, supervisors and department representatives will not be the ones who originally disclose it. With the existing requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, and high profile coverage that our member's misconduct can generate, it may be impossible to keep the entire matter a secret. It is important within our environment that we attempt to protect the confidentiality of the process and the integrity and self-esteem of the member.

Section Four: The Supervisor's Role

Supervisors play an important role in the overall scheme of things within the organization. They are effective based upon the way they carry out their responsibilities.

All supervisors, no matter what their level in the organization, are expected to carry out their duties in a considerate, respectful manner. Positive motivation is the preferred method of guiding members to be effective and more productive. Positive reinforcement, "catching members are doing something right", and citing positive performance as an example for others to follow, has proven to be much more effective than identifying negative behavior or performance, punishing it, and expecting that to serve as the example from which others are to learn.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for a person to out-perform his/her self- image. A member's self-image (positive or negative) has a direct impact on productivity, and supervisors are responsible for improving productivity within the organization. This reality illustrates the fact that supervisors must share the responsibility for helping members maintain positive self-images, and by doing so help the members remain positive and healthy contributors at Hurricane Fire & Rescue.

It is important to understand that supervisors are expected to solve problems, and when they don't, problems get exaggerated. In order for supervisors to consistently solve problems in a positive manner, they must take a very flexible approach to problem solving, keeping the goal of their actions in mind at all times. When dealing with problems involving behavior or performance of members, the supervisor's success will many times depend on his/her ability to put the responsibility for the solution back on the member then help them. It is important that supervisors have excellent listening skills, display empathy when listening and carrying out their duties, and by all means, avoid being self-righteous when evaluating problems involving the conduct of others. Effectively dealing with the negative can create loyalty and commitment from the members in the future.

The most effective tools supervisors can use are setting a good example, coaching, counseling, encouraging, directing, and other supporting actions. In fact, to prevent major problems, regular coaching and counseling are critical; however the supervisor must document a sustained history of unsatisfactory performance by a member.

At times, upper-level supervisors may have to dictate an absolute solution to a personnel problem to a lower-level supervisor who is handling the situation. However, occurrences such as this should be kept to a minimum. In most situations, if an absolute course of action is being dictated from above, regardless of the supervisor's recommendations, the upper-level supervisor should strongly consider handling it personally or getting directly involved in the problem. This helps minimize supervisors appearing to simply be the messenger from above, rather than decision makers. Also, these types of decisions are usually most effective if, whenever possible, all levels of supervision are kept fully informed.

Section Five: Being Responsible Leaders

Leadership is the critical element in maintaining the high standards of performance and the positive image of Hurricane Fire & Rescue within the community and the fire service.

There are many leaders in Hurricane Fire & Rescue. Some are formal leaders who have this responsibility not only because of their structured positions in the organization, but usually also because of demonstrated ability. Others are informal leaders who do not hold structural positions of leadership in the organization, but are viewed by the members as leaders just the same. This leadership responsibility, whether formal or informal, is one of the most critical elements in the overall, effectiveness and well being of the organization. As a leader, you are always setting an example, whether intentionally or not. This example may be good or bad, but it's always there. It is extremely difficult for a leader to act unprofessionally in his/her work group, then attempt to take a

professional approach to problem solving with the same group members. As a leader, your actions will speak much louder than anything you say.

All supervisors and leaders with Hurricane Fire & Rescue should share their expectations up front with people for whom they are responsible and stress the accountability of each member. Those expectations need to be realistic and in concert with the overall expectations of the organization. There should be no doubt as to what is expected regarding behavior and performance. Basically, everyone should be well aware of what is allowed and what is not allowed in the system.

Leaders must remember that if they condone a particular unacceptable act or substandard performance, they will most likely see it again in the future.

Leaders must avoid taking every problem they encounter personally. This will usually serve no purpose other than to make a positive solution almost impossible to achieve and to make young, healthy leaders old and sick before their time. True leaders, when faced with problems involving people, which most problems do, use an approach that is directed not only towards solving the immediate problem, but also improving the situation for the future. This not only helps to improve the particular situation encountered, but also teaches other current (and future) leaders in the organization a positive approach to problem solving. It is an inherent responsibility of Hurricane Fire & Rescue leaders to develop and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future.

Another important element of effective leadership in the organization is to be an effective follower. Every leader is a follower in some other portion of the organization, function, or relationship. It is hard to sustain a reputation as an effective leader when you are an ineffective follower. Place a high level of importance on following, and do not do things to your boss or leaders that you would not want people you're responsible for to do to you.

Section Six: Maintaining the Environment

We must all accept the responsibility associated with maintaining our positive environment, delivering quality service, and for cultivating change and improvement in the future.

At one time or another, life can be a difficult journey for all of us. We have decided at Hurricane Fire & Rescue that we do not have to create an atmosphere that unnecessarily contributes to this difficulty. We accept our members with the expectation that, barring some unusual set of circumstances, you will remain a member for most of your adult life. You should be encouraged to devote your energies to improving your performance and the system in general. Maintaining this environment requires a high level of commitment by all members to make it effective. It is far from a "good-ole-boy" system and it demands an incredible dedication to providing whatever is in the best interest of the organization.

The organization's approach to achieving results is very important in the motivation of the members. We tend to take an exceptional approach to managing our members because our members are exceptional people. The assumption that most of the members of Hurricane Fire & Rescue require close supervision and control is not accurate, and if acted out, can diminish the performance of highly motivated, self-starting individuals and groups within the system. From a motivational standpoint, it could insult the majority of the workforce. This is not to say that some control is not needed, but carried to the extreme, it is not effective at Hurricane Fire & Rescue.

There are very few organizational secrets, and creating unnecessary intrigue over an issue can result in distrust in the system. Other than personal problems, disciplinary actions, issues involving litigation, and perhaps politically sensitive issues that require appropriate timing to be effective, it is best to keep issues in the organization out in the open for discussion.

It seems that many members judge the organization by how they personally are treated during bad times. In fact, in the past it was said that when you are in trouble, you find out how the organization really feels about you. It can also be said that when the organization is in trouble, it may find out how the members feel about it. One thing is for sure, if we are going to enjoy the good times that come with being a Hurricane Fire & Rescue member, then we must come together and endure the bad times that also come with the affiliation. We may all suffer in the community for the actions of one of us. Remembering this should help guide our conduct at all times.

Our system recognizes that people are not "loose leaf" as are procedures, and people may not be as easy to revise as a procedure. If we seriously damage the spirit of a member at any level of the organization, we may never get his/her commitment back. People have feelings, and their feelings must be taken into consideration when making decisions on their membership status. On the other hand, members must not mistake or misinterpret this compassionate, empathetic approach as weakness on the part of the supervisors. The environment is fragile, and is at risk when dealing with people problems within Hurricane Fire & Rescue.

Section Seven: Establishing Individual Expectations and Roles.

Hurricane Fire & Rescue is not perfect, and nobody said it is. However, it will only be as good as we commit to making it.

And so we have it. A philosophy that describes in great detail the way Hurricane Fire & Rescue members are to perform, behave, treat each other and interact, no matter what level they attain during their careers. Living this philosophy is not easy. As a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult and requires constant, conscious effort on the part of all of us each and every day of our lives. This philosophy does not intend to establish a "secret society" or smother internal disagreement

within Hurricane Fire & Rescue. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the organization can remain committed to its mission, and at the same time, improve the capability of the members, keeping them motivated, healthy, positive and productive.

“Organizational Imperfections” will always exist in Hurricane Fire & Rescue. In fact, sometimes they can provide the clues we need to direct change and create improvement in the system. Life is not perfect, and neither is Hurricane Fire & Rescue. If we dwell on these imperfections, raise them above all the exceptional things occurring in organization, then we can all wallow in the down side of living, whether at work or in other aspects of our lives. But if we recognize imperfections as opportunities to continue to improve, then we can keep them in perspective and continue to positively move the organization forward.

Whether performing a line function, or working as a support staff person, we rely on each other to be successful.

It is critical to remember that to really be an exceptional team, everyone must take care of one another to sustain the level of service our customers have come to expect and deserve. Hazing new members or being disrespectful towards older, more senior members is damaging and tends to diminish the feeling of unity.

If necessary, we need to be willing to protect what we have built. Hurricane Fire & Rescue has in the past, and will continue in the future, to periodically be challenged for a number of reasons. About the time we think we are not vulnerable is actually when we are most vulnerable as an organization. We each have the responsibility to leave Hurricane Fire & Rescue better than we found it in some way. We have the responsibility to pass along to future generations the traditions, values, knowledge and determination that have moved Hurricane Fire & Rescue forward.

The responsibility to learn and practice this philosophy is yours. If you cannot do so, it would be best if you did not become or stay a member of Hurricane Fire & Rescue. We are all members of Hurricane Fire & Rescue by choice. Nobody forced us to apply for our membership, nor does anyone internally force us to remain a member. We are committed to excellence internally and externally, not to doing “just good enough” to get by, or to damaging and destroying each other as we proceed through our work lives. It is our positive commitment to quality service and to each other that has made us what we are today, and through constant assessment and change, will sustain us in the future.

RULES OF CONDUCT

The following list of directives represents the conduct standards for members of Hurricane Fire & Rescue. The basis for these regulations is the following policy:

Every member of Hurricane Fire & Rescue is expected to operate in a highly self-disciplined manner and is responsible to regulate his/her own conduct in a positive and mature way. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action, ranging from counseling to dismissal.

ALL MEMBERS WILL:

1. Follow operational manuals and written directives of Hurricane Fire & Rescue.
2. Use their training and capabilities to protect the public at all times.
3. Work competently in their positions to cause all organizational programs to operate effectively.
4. Always conduct themselves to reflect credit on Hurricane Fire & Rescue.
5. Supervisors will manage in an effective, considerate manner:
Subordinates will follow instructions in a positive, cooperative manner.
6. Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the organization.
7. Keep themselves informed to do their jobs effectively.
8. Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare.
9. Operate safely and use good judgment.
10. Keep themselves physically fit.
11. Obey the law.
12. Be careful of Hurricane Fire & Rescue equipment and property.

MEMBERS WILL NOT:

1. Engage in any activity that is detrimental to Hurricane Fire & Rescue.
2. Engage in a conflict of interest to the organization or use their position with Hurricane Fire & Rescue for personal gain or influence.
3. FIGHT
4. STEAL.
5. Use alcoholic beverages, debilitating drugs, or any substances, which could impair their physical or mental capabilities while representing Hurricane Fire & Rescue.
6. Engage in any sexual harassment.