

Do What's Right

Weekly Discussion Points

Use these discussion points in your weekly briefings as a reminder to employees of the EEO and conduct issues covered in the Do What's Right training at the beginning of the fire season.

Zero Tolerance Policies: Review written policies on Zero Tolerance of Discrimination and Zero Tolerance of Sexual Harassment/Harassment. These policies are in effect year round. That means, no matter where we are – the yard, an office, a field site, a vehicle, the fire line – we must treat each other with respect.

Your Responsibility: If you see inappropriate actions or harassment taking place, talk to the people who are doing it; tell them to stop. They are causing problems in the workplace that could lead to safety and crew cohesion issues. If you aren't comfortable talking to them, let the supervisor know what's going on. If that's not possible, bring it to someone else's attention – that person could be someone higher in the organization.

Public Eye: We are always in the public eye and many look up to us. We want and need the support of the community for our firefighting mission. Inappropriate behavior invariably gets back to your supervisor. The lasting effect of negative perceptions is hard to overcome. Remember, it takes a long time to build a good reputation, but just a short time to ruin one

Alcohol and Drugs: If you have any doubts that we are serious about the use of alcohol and drugs at the workplace, remember the Director's zero tolerance policy. This isn't a reminder; it's a statement – don't do it or you will not be working here. If you drink on your own time, that's fine. However, if drinking or its aftereffects impairs your work performance, we will have no choice but to take action to correct the situation. This is a major safety issue. Be responsible if you are going to drink.

Media: Discuss local policy for dealing with the media and the importance of the message being sent. Why is it important to remain sensitive to the public's point of view? We have different perspectives for some of the same words/phrases. Discuss good fire year vs. bad fire year and how our use of these words differs from the public's point of view. Identify your Public Information Officer. If you see media with a camera, assume they are reporting and direct them to the appropriate person.

Hazing: Hazing is a form of harassment. Training, crews, and job assignments are made by supervisors based on the experience and qualifications of the individuals and the needs of the unit. If our folks are receiving assignments that are designed to help them learn new skills, that's important. However, if they are receiving assignments that are

degrading or belittling and can affect someone's personal health and well-being, that is wrong and it won't be tolerated. Treat everyone with respect.

Respect: *You have to show respect to get respect.* Treat everyone with patience and respect. Make sure that people are trained right the first time to help avoid further problems. Supervisors set the tone for the workplace, so if they show their workers respect, chances are their employees will show each other respect as well. Remember, praise in public and discipline in private.

After Hours: Employees have a responsibility to inform their supervisor if they have been drinking before reporting to work. When it comes to alcohol use, everyone needs to use their best judgment and err on the side of caution. Supervisors should not let employees, who have been drinking, drive and should refer to local policies on alcohol use when they are called in to work.

Alcohol: As individuals, if you choose to drink on your off-duty time and it does not affect your work performance, we are ok with that. However, if drinking or its aftereffects impairs your work performance, we will have no choice but to take action to correct the situation – you could lose your job. Remember, this is a major safety issue. Your actions on the fire line can cause harm to not only you, but others as well. Be responsible if you are going to drink.

Inappropriate behaviors may occur as a result of using alcohol including: a loss of inhibition resulting in people saying and doing the wrong things including verbal and sexual harassment, sexual assaults, destruction of property, (trashed hotel rooms while on R&R) and other off-duty unethical and illegal conduct. You can be disciplined for this behavior. Be careful; think of the safety of your crew.

Prescription Drugs & Fit for Duty: Discuss the possible side effects of prescription drugs and how they could affect your work performance. Discuss the consequences to safety in sharing prescription drugs, i.e., different reactions to medication. You must be fit for duty at all times. Don't share prescription drugs. Remember there is Zero Tolerance for drugs in the workplace.

If you think a prescription drug you take is affecting your ability to work, you may consider advising your supervisor.

Hostile work environment: A hostile work environment happens when your comments or actions are sexual in nature and they have the effect of interfering with a person's job performance. By doing this, you are creating an intimidating or offensive work environment. We have a zero tolerance for that kind of behavior here. We must all take responsibility for creating and ensuring a healthy and safe work environment.

Inappropriate Touching: Remember, this is a workplace, not a school, a gym, or a friend's house and, as such, all employee behavior should reflect the appropriate attitude. Inappropriate contact is not allowed. Treat each other with respect.

Comfort Levels: Because we have worked together now for a few weeks and our comfort level with each other has improved, our dialogue is probably on a more personal level. Remember – inappropriate jokes and language are still inappropriate. Keep it cleaned up!

Stressful Situations: When in stressful fire situations, both for supervisors and employees, using inappropriate or offensive language does not help resolve the situation or expedite action. It usually creates hostility from the person targeted by the verbal abuse and diminishes the user's stature as a member of the team. Remember, not only does your crew hear you, but often the public does as well.

Clothing, Books, and Materials: We've been working together for the season and you may feel comfortable bringing items to work that you may not have a month ago. Don't get into a situation by having material or wearing clothes you would not have worn or read the first week of work. It was inappropriate then, it is still inappropriate now. Remain professional, act responsibly, and if it doesn't feel right it probably isn't.

Twittering: Work should be your primary focus during working hours – we are paid to be productive and safe. If there is down time, look for something to do, offer assistance to your co-workers. Keep busy with work assignments. Don't 'twitter' your time away.

Be careful you do not give the perception of representing/speaking for the agency on any topics you put on Twitter. And, remember, nothing is anonymous. If it is not appropriate for your work bulletin board, it probably is not a good idea to put on the internet.

Jokes: If you have any doubts that what you are saying or how you are saying it may be offensive, don't say it. Just because it seems to you like a gray area doesn't make it acceptable. If you have any doubts, be smart enough not to use the joke.

Inappropriate Materials: There is no room at the work site for inappropriate books, pictures, or other offensive materials. If you have or display such items, you could be disciplined. Pornographic materials in the workplace can be considered harassment. They need to be left out of the workplace. Don't bring them to work.

Texting in the Workplace: Know and discuss the local policy for use of cell phones and texting during working hours. Texting can be discourteous and a distraction from assigned work duties and in some instances can cause safety concerns.

Executive Order – 13513, signed into effect on 10/1/2009 by President Barack Obama – prohibits texting while driving a government vehicle or while driving your own vehicle

on official government business. It also prohibits texting from government cell phones (electronic equipment) while in your own vehicle.

1. Understand local policy on cell phone use and texting.
2. Set a standard for crew regarding cell phone use.
3. Don't lose your situational awareness by texting.
4. Texting and mobile email devices – use correctly and when appropriate.
5. Remember, whatever you text can be downloaded, printed and/or saved.
6. Be sure what you text you are willing to say to any person face to face.

Communicating Concerns: Sharing feelings and concerns with coworkers is often a good idea because it may help keep you from jumping to the wrong conclusions. Know what your options are when something in the workplace does not feel right. Supervisors need to communicate decisions clearly to their employees; a little information goes a long way in helping to prevent problems.

Dress Code: You must wear clothing that is appropriate for the workplace. T-shirts with potentially offensive language or messages should not be worn. Make sure you wear clothing that is not revealing or sexually provocative – and that goes for everyone, men and women.

Staring: If you are staring at another employee in a threatening or inappropriate way, stop now. Staring can be a form of harassment and there's zero tolerance for harassment in our organization. If you observe this inappropriate behavior, be a change agent – advise your co-workers to respect each other and stop the behavior. Tell a supervisor, if needed.

Rumors: Always remember to stay away from disrespectful and inappropriate talk and behavior. Rumors almost always have a negative effect on a crew. Every individual in an organization, not just supervisors, has the responsibility to be a change agent. Always keep in mind our core values – Duty, Integrity, Respect – and apply them to our job.

Drugs: This is a reminder on the use of drugs – don't use drugs at work or come to work under the influence of drugs. There is a legal consequence for their use. Some positions are covered under the drug testing policy. The employee who fails a drug test could be dismissed. We have a zero tolerance policy for drug use on the job. There are no exceptions to the rule.

Social Media: Discuss appropriate times for using cell phone cameras and other technological devices. Discuss the appropriate times that social media can be a benefit in the workplace (accidents and investigative reviews) and when it can be a detriment in the workplace (loss of situational awareness). Once something is put on the internet, it is

always there. Exercise sound professional judgment and think of possible unintended consequences.

Travel – R&R Behavior: We are always in the public eye and always representing the agency. Know your local policy on travel and appropriate behavior while in travel status and/or on R&R. Act responsibly and manage your fatigue. Do not behave in ways that will be adverse to the agency. Remember, we **can** control our behavior

Social Networking: How do we portray our work environment – professional and welcoming or offensive and inappropriate? Display professionalism at all times. Discuss professionalism and ways to improve our image and to provide a good working environment we can be proud of. Keep environment free from harassment and/or discrimination. Be attuned to the language we use, the way we present ourselves and the way we treat each other. Speak to your supervisor or EEO counselor, if you feel you have experienced discrimination. Any form of discrimination is destructive to a cohesive environment. It is critical to set the line of what is and is not acceptable behavior. Don't cross that line!

Posting pictures on a website: Don't compromise your co-workers by placing inappropriate pictures on websites. This could affect crew cohesion and portray our Unit/Agency in an unprofessional manner. What is on the website becomes public and we are held accountable for our actions on line, if they involve people we work with. All social and work etiquette does not go out the window just because you are on your own time. You still have a responsibility to your co-workers and Unit/Agency.

Government paperwork: It is up to you to know/learn the rules and the processes involved in completing government paperwork. If you don't know or understand the rules and/or processes, ask someone for clarification and/or assistance. Be honest in your travel claims, OT and hazard pay. There are penalties for theft and fraud. Do the right thing.