

Vashon Island Fire & Rescue

Policies and Operating Guidelines

Policy:	DISCIPLINE AND APPEAL / DISTRICT ORGANIZATION	
Number	Effective Date	Approved and Issued:
2022	01/04/00	01/04/00

1.0 REFERENCE

Code of Conduct

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Vashon Island Fire & Rescue requires its employees and volunteers to strive to maintain high standards of on and off the job personal conduct. The intent of discipline is to assure observation of the rules, regulations, and customs of the District with respect and consideration for all employees and volunteers.

All employees and volunteers of the District, regardless of rank or assignment, are required to discharge their assigned jobs conscientiously and to conduct themselves in a manner that will bring credit on the District, the community, and themselves. They shall, at all times, show respect for the authority of those directing their work and observe the spirit as well as the intent of the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's), Code of Conduct, and the practices and customs of Vashon Island Fire & Rescue.

The administration and review of disciplinary actions shall be conducted within the recognized chain of command. **The District is separated into two departments; (1) Operations and (2) Finance and Administration. The Assistant Chief of Operations and the Director of Finance and Administration shall be responsible for supervision of disciplinary actions within their respective departments and internal divisions; both Department Heads shall report directly to the Fire Chief.**

2.3 An employee or volunteer may be disciplined by the Fire Chief or designee for any of the following reasons:

- a. Dishonesty, including but not limited to dishonesty in securing appointment.
- b. Incompetency
- c. Inefficiency
- d. Unauthorized absence, including patterns of habitual tardiness.
- e. Neglect of work
- f. Insubordination
- g. Under the influence while on the job

- h. Reporting for work under the influence of alcoholic beverage or controlled substances.
- i. Conviction of job related crimes, including but not limited to any crimes involving dishonesty or moral turpitude, which the employer believes demonstrates the employee's or volunteer's unfitness for public employment or volunteer work.
- j. Disorderly conduct while on the job.
- k. Negligent, reckless or knowing damage or waste of public property.
- l. Negligent, reckless or knowing violation of any provisions of this section.
- m. Conduct unbecoming District Personnel; on and off the job.
- n. Violation of any lawful order, directive, or policy of a superior including but not limited to the Board of Commissioners, Fire Chief, Assistant Chief of Operations, Director of Finance and Administration, Battalion Chief Training/Safety Officer and Station Officer(s).
- o. Any other act or omission showing the employee or volunteer unfit for public employment or volunteer work.

2.4 Disciplinary action shall be the primary responsibility of the Fire Chief, and may include but is not limited to an Oral Reprimand, Written Reprimand, Suspension, and/or Discharge. The Fire Chief shall take such action as required, subject to review by the Board.

2.5 Specific disciplinary actions shall be as follows, listed in order of severity:

2.5.1 **Oral Reprimand** – An oral warning, usually for a minor offense and handled at the division level. The reprimand should include an explanation of violation and a request for corrective action on the part of the employee or volunteer. A letter outlining the oral reprimand will be given to the employee or volunteer and placed in their personnel file.

2.5.2 **Written Reprimand** – Issued by the Fire Chief or designee for more serious infractions. The reprimand should include a written statement of the violation and required corrective action on the part of the employee or volunteer. Copies will go to the employee or volunteer, their personnel file, and to the Fire Chief and/or supervisor.

2.5.3 **Suspension** – A suspension is a temporarily enforced absence from work in a non-paid or non-point status for serious or flagrant violations. A suspension

for disciplinary purposes for a period not to exceed the time limits specified herein may be ordered by the Fire Chief or designee. *Further, officers having responsible supervision of stations may temporarily suspend volunteers from duty when continued duty status would cause a furtherance of the alleged violation, the volunteer is physically unfit for duty, or the volunteer refuses to obey an order. Immediate notification of the Fire Chief and Assistant Chief of Operations is required.*

- 2.5.4 **Discharge** – Discharge represents the most severe form of disciplinary action. In most cases, the employee or volunteer under consideration for discharge will have clearly demonstrated unwillingness or refuses to conform to recognized standards of conduct. Usually, actions of this magnitude will follow a progression of lesser disciplinary actions before determination is made to dismiss them. Certain violations, however, may be serious enough to warrant dismissal on the first or second offense.
- 2.6 In any disciplinary action against an employee or volunteer, pertinent information shall be reduced to written form by the supervisor and a copy provided to the employee or volunteer. Any written notice shall remain in the employee’s or volunteer’s personnel file for a time as specified below:
- a. **Oral Reprimand with written notice** shall remain in the employee’s or volunteer’s personnel file for a period of one (1) year.
 - b. **Written Reprimand** shall remain in the employee’s or volunteer’s personnel file for a period of two (2) years.
 - c. **Written Discipline** including, but not limited to reduction in pay, demotion, probation, suspension or suspension without pay, and/or removal of the employee or volunteer from employment or work shall remain in their personnel file for a period of four (4) years.
 - d. Any repeat offense shall cause all notices of discipline to remain in the employee’s or volunteer’s personnel file for a period of four (4) years.

Such written notice shall state the following:

- a. The cause of the discipline
- b. The specific reasons and/or facts supporting the cause.
- c. The form of discipline to be imposed
- d. The effective date of the discipline and that the employee or volunteer has the right to appeal any disciplinary action resulting in:
 1. A suspension
 2. A reduction in pay or rank (demotion)
 3. Removal

- 2.7 Such notice shall not be given if the disciplinary actions were brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities through the initiation of grievance procedures, as authorized.
- 2.8 Written notice of the discipline shall be delivered personally to the employee or volunteer or mailed to the last known address by certified mail, return receipt requested. An employee or volunteer shall be deemed notified of the disciplinary action upon the happening of either of the two aforementioned events. If the proposed discipline involves suspension or suspension without pay or points, probation, demotion or termination from employment or work, written notice shall also be provided to the Director of Finance and Administration.
- 2.9 Written notice of appeal must be mailed to the Board within thirty calendar days of the action.
- 2.10 Every effort shall be made to settle appeals at the lowest possible level of supervision.
- 2.10.1 Employees or volunteers shall be unimpeded and free from restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal in seeking adjudication of their appeals.
- 2.10.2 Any grievance, not settled by an employee's immediate supervisor, may be brought before the Fire Chief for review. All requests for review must be written, stating the particulars of the appeal.
- 2.11 The function of the Disciplinary Board is to investigate, review and make recommendations to the Fire Chief on matters of corrective discipline within the District. **The Fire Chief may convene the Disciplinary Board either on their own or when requested by any employee or volunteer who has a written charge pending against them.**

The Disciplinary Board shall be comprised of:

- a. The Assistant Chief of Operations or designee who will act as Chairman of the Disciplinary Board and will vote only in the case of a tie vote.
 - b. An Officer or Supervisor chosen by the Fire Chief.
 - c. An employee or volunteer chosen by the employee or volunteer charged.
- 2.12 Findings and recommendations of the Disciplinary Board shall be recorded in writing. A unanimous recommendation for the disciplinary action is not required.

- 2.11.1 It is expected that in the interest of preserving the disciplinary system and in the spirit of justice, all employees and volunteers shall cooperate in selecting Disciplinary Board members so as to constitute a fair and impartial hearing.
- 2.12.2 Any employee and volunteer involved with the preferring or investigation of charges or is implicated in the violation in any way shall not serve on the Disciplinary Board.
- 2.12.3 The Disciplinary Board, in addition to making a recommendation to the Fire Chief, shall recommend if the employee or volunteer is to be found guilty, and recommend whether it is to be considered a first, second or third offense. In addition, they shall also make recommendations regarding the type and degree of discipline.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Discipline: A fundamental learning process that reinforces behavior and performance standards expected of all employees and volunteers. It is instruction that develops self-control, character, orderliness and efficiency. Discipline can be divided into two categories: The commendation or regard for exceptional performance; and, corrective discipline.
- 3.2 Work: When a volunteer or employee is in service for Vashon Island Fire & Rescue.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 A Supervisor is responsible for making assignments, reviewing and evaluating performance, approving requests, and maintaining proper conduct and discipline among their staff. They are responsible for:
 - a. Maintaining an atmosphere, which will generate good professional relations and efficient performance.
 - b. Keeping their staff informed of the operating standards, administrative instructions and conditions of employment they must observe.
 - c. Taking necessary steps, through the application of good management techniques, to prevent situations which might lead to disciplinary actions.
 - d. Gathering and analyzing all facts and considering circumstances before taking disciplinary action.
 - e. Constructively counseling volunteers individually and in private.

- f. When circumstances warrant, initiating or recommending more severe disciplinary action to their supervisor.
- g. Recognizing and commending individual or group performance that is above normally accepted standards of performance and conduct.

4.2 The Assistant Chief of Operations and Director of Finance and Administration will maintain discipline equitably within their respective departments and internal divisions. A primary responsibility is to determine that all employees and volunteers know and understand the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's), the Code of Conduct, administrative instructions, and conditions of the job they must observe. They are responsible for:

- a. Being constantly aware of the attitude and conduct of employees and volunteers under their supervision by frequent meetings with subordinates and review of records.
- b. Investigating all written complaints and forwarding the charges and recommendations for action.
- c. Administering or initiating necessary disciplinary action and when conditions warrant, ordering temporary suspension of an employee and volunteer pending further disciplinary action.

4.2.1 The Assistant Chief of Operations shall coordinate all Disciplinary Board actions within the District. Among the duties and goals shall be:

- a. Provide follow-up on all disciplinary actions taken to assure compliance.
- b. Serve as Chairperson of the Disciplinary Board when the Disciplinary Board is convened.

4.3 The Fire Chief shall have final responsibility for the administration of equitable discipline throughout the District. The Fire Chief will communicate to all employees and volunteers within the jurisdiction of the rules, regulations, and other conditions of the job that must be observed.

4.4 Final adjudication of all disciplinary actions shall be made by the Fire Chief, and set forth in writing.

5.0 **GUIDELINES**
NA

6.0 **ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**
N/A

7.0 **APPENDIX**