

ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE

Standard Operating Guidelines

1000.030

Public Complaints

Implemented: 11/09/2005

Revised:

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Adam Harrison, Fire Chief

PURPOSE:

All ECFR members will respond to the public in a courteous, caring, and appropriate manner. However, members may receive citizen concerns and/or complaints regarding personnel and/or services and they should be addressed in a prompt, courteous, and positive manner.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide personnel with a policy that provides for an efficient and fair resolution to concerns and/or complaints made by the public.

SCOPE:

All Personnel

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD OR AT THE STATION

Citizen complaints and/or concerns range from individual performance or nonperformance to the overall level of service provided. Officers should attempt to resolve complaints at the lowest level possible in the department. Formal complaints, including those from citizens wishing to remain anonymous, will be documented on a Complaint Record Form. The form will be filled out as completely as possible and forwarded to headquarters where it will be logged and assigned to the appropriate Battalion Chief and/or District Chief for investigation.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY FIRE ADMINISTRATION

Citizen complaints received at ECFR headquarters will cause a Complaint Record Form to be generated and the complaint assigned to the appropriate Battalion Chief and/or District Chief for investigation. All complaints alleging criminal misconduct will be assigned to the Deputy Chief and the investigation may include law enforcement authorities.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

Each complaint received by the Department will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. Regardless of severity, each complaint should be regarded as an opportunity to examine our customer service at the point of contact. Unless the complainant requests "no contact", the investigating officer should contact the complainant as soon as possible to inform the complainant that their concern is being addressed. Upon contact, the following steps should be performed:

- Inform the complainant of your name and rank and how you relate to the area of concern.
- Restate the complaint, as you understand it.
- Ask if your understanding of the complaint is correct.
- Reconcile any discrepancies.
- Ask complainant if they would like you to contact them when the investigation is complete.



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- Thank the complainant for bringing the concern(s) to your attention.
- Interview the individual/crew that the complaint was lodged against and document the results. This phase of the investigation shall recognize the Firefighters Bill of Rights.
- Discuss the call/incident that generated the complaint.
- Ask if anything unusual occurred.
- Describe the incident as related by the complainant.
- Discuss any discrepancies.

DISPOSITION

After considering all available information, the investigating officer will make one of the following determinations:

- UNFOUNDED- The alleged act did not occur.
- EXONERATED- The act occurred but was justified, lawful and proper.
- NOT SUSTAINED- The investigation produced information insufficient to prove or disapprove the allegation.
- SUSTAINED- All or part of the act occurred as alleged. (A finding of "SUSTAINED" must be based on the existence of substantial fact in support of reasonable proof.)

DOCUMENTATION

The investigating officer will provide written documentation of his actions, stating the facts that include the statement/s of the individual/crew. In some cases, the investigator will need to obtain written statement(s) from the individual/crew, which will be attached to the Complaint Record Form.

FOLLOW UP

After the investigating officer has determined the appropriate "finding," a meeting should be held with the crew/individual named in the complaint, along with any representative, if requested. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the finding and any pertinent information. If corrective or disciplinary action is required, it will be outlined at this time.

Many complaints will fall in the "NOT SUSTAINED" and "EXONERATED" category. These incidents should be thoroughly examined from a customer service point of view. The focus of the discussion concerning these incidents should be on how future encounters of a similar nature might be handled to avoid creating unhappy customers.

If the complainant requested follow up, the investigating officer should, thank them for sharing their concerns and advise them that the complaint was investigated, and proper action was taken.

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THE COMPLETED COMPLAINT RECORD FORM AND ALL ATTACHMENTS WILL BE FORWARDED TO HEADQUARTERS FOR FILING.