



PRINCE GEORGE FIRE AND EMS

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Date: October 1, 2012

Title: Organizational Communications
Procedure

Authorized By:

I. General

The guidelines outlined in this procedure are designed to ensure that our members are kept properly informed through the proper utilization of effective communication methods.

II. Procedures

- A. Face-to-face communication is the preferred method of communicating in Prince George Fire & EMS.
- B. Where face-to-face communication may not be feasible, the telephone or radio (if appropriate) should be utilized which provides for 'live' exchange.
- C. Electronic messaging (e-mails and texting) will be the next preferred method recognizing the evolution in electronic communications.
 1. E-mails and text messages are public record under the Freedom of Information Act. Content and appropriateness should always be considered.
- D. The departments' website will be the official posting and storage location of organizational policies, procedures, and communications.
- E. Written communication should be considered as the last alternative, utilizing the department's website as the posting site.
 1. Written communication provides documentation and can support/substantiate the previous methods.
 - a. Letters – a formal, written method of communicating a specific message both internal and external to the organization
 - b. Memorandums – an informal, written method of communicating general information within the organization
 - c. Bulletins – announces immediate changes to normal business practices. Should be limited in duration (i.e., 30-90 days)

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- d. Reports – an official documentation of facts surrounding an event
- e. Policy – serves as the philosophy or guiding principle of the organization

II. Procedures (Cont'd)

- f. Procedure – provides step-by-step direction on how we will conduct business

F. Overall Communications

- 1. For communications to be effective, steps must be taken with the same discipline as patient care, apparatus maintenance, or firefighting.
- 2. The Sender of the communication has a responsibility to ask the following questions before sending the message:
 - a. What is the intent of this message?
 - b. Who should receive it?
 - c. Is time a critical factor for delivery?
 - d. What methodology needs to be used?
 - e. Are the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, & Why) addressed?
- 3. The Receiver has a responsibility to ask questions and provide feedback to confirm receipt of the message.
- 4. Consideration should be given to utilizing more than one methodology in communicating to assure an effective information exchange occurs.

G. E-mail Use

- 1. If the message is PERSONAL in nature, the e-mail should be addressed specifically to the individual recipient.
 - a. Utilizing the Department "Personal Data Form", members should keep Fire & EMS Administration informed of contact changes

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2. If the message is ROUTINE/GENERAL in nature, the e-mail should be addressed to the station mailbox, the Chiefs' mailbox, and to the "All Group" mailbox.
3. If the message is CRITICAL in nature, the e-mail should be addressed to the station mailbox, the Chiefs' mailbox, and to the "All Group" mailbox. In addition, the words "CRITICAL MESSAGE" should be typed in the subject line and a page should be sent out for everyone to check their e-mail inbox. Such messages should be first authorized by the Director or Chiefs'.

II. Procedures (Cont'd)

4. Members are expected to check e-mails on a regular basis and return/confirm messages within twenty-four hours of receipt.
- H. In-House, Supportive Communication Alternatives
1. Chiefs' should consider establishing additional methods to ensure effective communications
 - a. Station Log Books to highlight pertinent information/assignments to the membership
 - 1) Consideration should be given to dating and signing each entry in the event additional information is needed.
 - b. 72-Hour Clipboard where the most recently disseminated (within the last three days) information would be posted in hard-copy for membership review
 - 1) Consideration should be given to purge information after three days and file in pass-along folder
 - c. Pass-along Folders where hard-copy correspondence downloaded/received by one member can be shared by others over time.

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1) Consideration should be given to file the information in chronological order and to purge the folder on a regular basis

I. Social Media

1. Media sites can create a multitude of problems both for individual members as well as Prince George Fire & EMS. The department can be held liable for members posting inappropriate, unprofessional, or discriminatory/harassing content.
2. Members should realize their content (though maybe not intentional) can be distributed virally across the internet.
3. Members shall be aware of and adhere to the content of County Administrative Policy, Section 130, "Electronic Information, Internet and Network Resources".

II. Procedures (Cont'd)

4. Prince George Fire & EMS enjoys the public trust through its member's integrity and professionalism. Members violating that trust through social media will be addressed in an appropriate manner.
5. Nothing in this section is meant to deprive a member of their free speech right. However, members should be aware that any indication on their personal site describing your affiliation with the department, coupled with information (i.e., language, pictures, videos) on the same site, could be perceived as representation and views of the department.

J. Cyber Communication Security

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1. Attention should be given to the potential loss, injury, or other damages from an electronic exposure through activities such as patient care records, department-related information on personal devices, and private information communicated via social networking sites.
2. Members should take into consideration the following cyber safety tips:
 - a. Destroy (shred, wipe out) any data or information that is no longer needed
 - b. Conduct department business on department devices and personal business on personal devices
 - c. Do not utilize member-specific information (i.e., social security numbers) if at all possible
 - d. Encrypt information or password protect it
 - e. If you suspect there has been a security breach that will negatively impact the department, immediately notify the Director

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