

# Leander Fire Department Way

*"Our Plan in How We  
Do Business"*



## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Executive Summary .....	3
Philosophy and Culture.....	9
Section One .....	9
Making the Commitment .....	9
Section Two .....	9
Being Responsible for Ourselves and Each Other .....	9
Section Three .....	11
Being Self-Disciplined.....	11
Disciplinary actions should be corrective, progressive and lawful.....	12
Section Four .....	13
The Supervisor’s Role.....	13
Section Five .....	15
Being Responsible Leaders.....	15
Section Six .....	16
Maintaining the Environment .....	16
Section Seven.....	18
Establishing Individual Expectations and Roles.....	18
RULES OF CONDUCT .....	20

# The Leander Fire Department Way

## *Our Plan in how we do Business*

### **Introduction**

The City of Leander is growing into a well-managed community. Its leadership is committed to providing excellent service and has encouraged efforts to improve service quality in all City departments. This approach has allowed the Leander Fire Department to positively begin to address our human and physical resources and has supported an environment that encourages excellence.

Our Fire Department is a unique organization, not just within the fire service, but compared to most organizations – public or private. Our members are frequently asked what makes the Leander Fire Department so unique. The answer to this question is simple – it is our people and our philosophy. Explaining our philosophy is not so simple. “The LFD Way” was developed with the intent of describing this Departmental philosophy. It is also intended to be prescriptive – that is, to describe how we would like our Department 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 a Department, 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 “Department” philosophy. As a Department, we prize excellence in service. We are a group with a selective membership 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 organization, because it serves the common good of the members and our customers – the public.

We are a close-knit family and are proud of it. The “LFD Way” attempts to describe the vision and culture of this family. It is a product of the questions and review of the recent mission statement, value presentation, and customer service guide. It is a dynamic document and will be reviewed periodically for necessary revisions.

### **Executive Summary**

The Leander Fire Department is a leader in its non-traditional approach to service delivery and personnel philosophy. This document was prepared to summarize the Philosophy of this exceptional group of people. “The Leander Fire Department Way” is intended to guide the behavior of all current and future members to ensure that we continue to reinforce the Department’s philosophy in our day to day interactions with each other and the public we serve. By setting

forth these tenets, we have a standard by which to measure our personal 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 Leander. We are here to protect our community. The Department 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 Leander Fire Department Way” is founded on the fundamental principle that our members are the foundation of this organization. The Department can be no better or stronger than its membership. Being a member of the Leander Fire Department is more than just a job, it includes a commitment to other Department members and to the citizens of Leander. 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 member 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 rules and regulations of the Department and that reflects the philosophy of this Department. In situations where self-discipline breaks down, disciplinary action must be imposed. Punitive action should only be used in conjunction with other corrective measures designed to resolve the problem. The Department 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 forth a sincere effort to help themselves. Managers and supervisors play important roles in making the Department’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.

Management is critical in maintaining the high standards of performance and the positive image of the Department within the community and the fire service. Management responsibility, whether formal or informal, is a determining factor in the overall effectiveness and well being of the Department. All Fire Department managers and supervisors 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 Department. It is an inherent responsibility of current Leander Fire Department leaders to develop and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future that live and practice the LFD Way. Each member must accept the responsibility associated with maintaining our environment, delivering 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. The Department recognizes that it is through the process of considering a number of different views that the best solutions are usually developed. The Department provides opportunities for members to channel concerns, criticisms and complaints within the structure of the organization. Member commitment is easy during the good times, but is truly tested during difficult times. The Leander Fire Department 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. Organizations are not static, they are constantly changing and evolving. We at the Leander Fire Department have made the decision to commit to making change a positive and healthy experience for our members and the public.

The Leander philosophy is not intended to smother internal disagreement or to stifle individuality. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the Department 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 to dwell on them to the point of missing the other positive aspects of the organization.

We, Leander Fire Department personnel are not just employees or volunteers, we are members. To be an exceptional team, team members must take care of each other. The Department cannot do much better outside with our customers than we do inside the Department with each other. Kindness and quality interaction begins at home, within the family – the other members of our Department. To really be effective, it must be practiced throughout the Department, from the top through the entire organization. The responsibility to learn and practice this philosophy lies with each individual. Members must make a conscious choice to belong. With membership must come a commitment to excellent service internally and externally. It is this positive commitment that helps us define who we are today and through constant assessment and change, this same commitment will sustain us in the future.

## **The LFD “Way” defines the Department’s personnel philosophy and organizational culture.**

It includes:

1. Providing the Best Service to Customers
2. Providing the Best Support to Members
3. Members Fitting Certain LFD Values
4. Managing Change/Always Improving
5. Members Being Responsible for the Organization
6. Promoting and Supporting the LFD “Way”
7. Never be stuck in tradition and Leaving No One Behind

## **Leander Fire Department Members will provide the Best Possible Service to Our Customers**

Service and members are:

Quick

- Skillful
- Caring
- Professional
- Resourceful

## **The LFD will Provide the Best Possible Support to Our Members**

Support includes:

- Life-time membership offered/self-selection out
- Being advocates for each other
- Second chance management
- Equality, irrespective of rank, civilian or sworn status
- Appropriate rehabilitation
- Courteous and respectful treatment of all members
- Health, fitness, medical, rehab support
- High safety concern and activity
- Complete EAP services
- Strong leaders and strong followers (team players)
- Smart and approachable management/leadership
- Internal relations behaviors (peer principle)
- Consideration
- Discretion
- Acceptance
- Unity
- Pleasant/fun atmosphere (management policy)
- Equipment/technology (a priority)
- On-going education and training opportunities

## **The LFD “Way” Encourages Members to Fit LFD Member Values and Characteristics**

Values/Characteristics include:

- Smart
- Unique individual/special differences
- On-going desire to be a member
- Self-discipline/self-development = self-respect/self-pride
- Understanding that conduct off-duty can affect members
- Committed/accountable
- Commitment to excellence
- Compassion
- Courtesy
- Professionalism
- Loyalty
- Innovation

- Honesty
- Open communication
- Committed to being healthy and physically fit
- Appreciative of LFD benefits/LFD members
- Cooperative/team player
- Inclined to coordinate/lead everywhere at every level
- Positive/constructive
- No sniveling
- No harassing other members maliciously
- Always helpful
- Nice

### **The LFD “Way” will Manage Change and Strive to Always Improve**

We should:

- Consider change as a regular event/well-managed process (always under construction)
- Help other members adapt to change
- Live and promote the LFD “Way”
- Maintain problem-solving environment
- Always improve/always care
- Seek opportunities
- Admit when change hasn’t worked and change back, or again, if necessary
- Plan and change creatively/actively
- Allow for timing and sharing of ideas/change
- Communicate change
- Support LFD’s “change environment”
- Process better ways, disagreements, or complaints appropriately through the system

### **Each Member is Directly Responsible for the Welfare and Support of LFD**

Remember that:

- LFD operation is essentially internal
- Members are paid/responsible for managing their affairs
- Members don’t exploit negative times (hurts everyone)
- Members don’t snivel about “they” – we are “they”
- Members don’t reinforce negative attitudes and/or behaviors
- Members lose if inside atmosphere is awful (it’s where we spend our whole working life)
- If LFD fails, it will do so from inside, not outside

### **Members will Support the LFD “Way”**

Remember that:

- LFD “Way” will work well for us, but members we shouldn’t be arrogant or self-righteous about it
- LFD membership doesn’t bring with it celebrity status

- LFD culture is not well understood outside the Department
- Members must attempt to stop bad things from happening
- Members don't bail out on other members
- Members are equally important
- Members don't every take LFD "Way" for granted – good times last only as long as members work at it
- Members do not leave their "wounded or dead" behind

### **Everything Gets Passed On and Members Don't Get Left Behind**

Remember that:

- Our reputations start when we do, so we should be concerned about it from the start
- Members protect/direct/mold/nurture the young and respect the old
- LFD environment is value based
- Members who retire are still members
- Family members are also part of the department
- Members appreciate the contributions of those who came before them
- Members inherit what previous members produced
- LFD "Way" is permanent/continuous
- LFD's "past" gives members their identity (members should learn from it)
- LFD's "today" gives members their purpose (members should enjoy it)
- LFD's "tomorrow" gives members their future (members must plan for it)
- LFD "Way" is human based
- Members' actions establish LFD's future

This document exists for all members of the Leander Fire Department. 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 Leander Fire Department Way."**



## Philosophy and Culture

### Section One

#### Making the Commitment

**Being a member of the Leander Fire Department is more than just a job, it includes a commitment to other department members and to the citizens of Leander.**

The Leander Fire Department is made up of members from various economic and social backgrounds. We have in common the sincere desire to serve the citizens of Leander, Texas. We are a family of professionals be it compensated or volunteers, 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, whether on or off duty. 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 our outside the organization. This document describes the philosophy of the Department 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 that the Department has is its members, each and every one of them. It has been said that when a once small organization grows to the 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 in our Department. No matter what position an individual fills in the Department, he or she is considered important and is to be treated as such.

### Section Two

#### Being Responsible for Ourselves and Each Other

**Each individual member of the Leander Fire Department 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 Department than we do with each other inside the Department. The Department’s internal relations philosophy clearly identifies and defines four

behaviors that are to be practiced by all members. Remember these behaviors and practice them 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. We are white, black, brown, male, female, Catholic, Jewish, old, young, disabled, and lots of others. 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 Department, not only in good times, but in difficult times as well. All members of the Department 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 Department.

**“BE NICE” is good advice for all members to follow.** The “Golden Rule” (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.) is alive and well in the Leander Fire Department in matters of external customer service and internal relations. Remember, “Nice begins with me.”

Members have a right to be different, as long as their behavior, appearance and job performance are not in conflict with the rule, regulations and organizational culture. Honoring and respecting individual and cultural diversity is critical in our Department 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 (i.e. something that distracts from the professionalism of the member, or personal activities that put other Department members at a disadvantage in the organization or in the community).

Members are provided with the 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.** If for some reason they cannot perform, they should bring this fact to their supervisor's attention at the first opportunity.

Each member's stature in the organization will be reinforced by his/her conduct and performance. There are some things that only you can do for yourself. 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 system. Your reputation is valuable possession; guard it, and remember it starts the day you enter the family.**

## 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 Department.**

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 Departmental Policies and Guidelines, 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.

The Department 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 don't let personal problems interfere with their performance. They recognize problems, address them, and correct them. It is absolutely unacceptable for a member to use illegal substances on or off duty.

### **LEANDER FIRE DEPARTMENT MEMBERS DON'T DO DRUGS...PERIOD!**

Abuse of alcohol, prescription drugs, anabolic steroids or any other 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 controlled substances at any Fire Department 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 Department that these acts are unacceptable so that nobody will violate the rule. These types of problems and misconduct will literally disappear from the Department if each and every member at all levels decides that such conduct is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Another critical issue in the overall effectiveness of the Department 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 in the Department.

## Disciplinary actions should be corrective, progressive and lawful

Supervisor's recommendations for disciplinary action should match organizational expectations, and their approach should follow the established discipline procedure or explain the reason for variation including the justifications. Department supervisors are to use punitive disciplinary action only when absolutely necessary to solve the 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 members directly involved; other members of the Department who are not involved at all, union representatives, peers, and supervisors above the level that is taking the action, external review boards and tribunals, and perhaps the media and the public.

Sometimes members, especially supervisors, complain about this, but it is reality and cannot be avoided. These are tough decisions, and must be treated as such. Mitigating circumstances should always be considered before a final decision is made on a disciplinary matter. As a supervisor, you may as well consider them, because everyone else that reviews your decision will. Taking shortcuts in the disciplinary process usually insures a negative result. 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. The Department owes it to the members to keep disciplinary proceedings confidential. This can avoid unnecessary embarrassment to the member and the Department.

Confidential in this sense does not mean that nobody will ever find out about the incident, but only that investigators, supervisors and management representatives will not be the ones who originally disclose it. With the existing requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, and the high-profile coverage that our member's misconduct can generate, it may be impossible to keep the entire matter a secret. The only promise that the Department can make along these lines, as previously mentioned, is that the initial disclosure can come from the member involved, a friend, or the media, but not the leaders handling the problem. 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 in the Department. They are effective based upon the way they carry out their responsibilities.**

All supervisors, no matter what their level in the Department, 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 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.

**Positive, or in some cases improved behavior and performance, should be rewarded in some way at every opportunity. Unacceptable behavior or performance should never be rewarded.** This approach can be as powerful a motivating force as exists, much more powerful than simply guarding the workforce and punishing the perceived non-conformists. There is documented evidence that structured, positive programs designed to improve the performance of one or more members of the Department are usually effective. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a person to outperform his or 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 Department. 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, productive and healthy contributors in the Department.

It is important to understand that supervisors are paid 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 the behavior or performance of members, the supervisor's success will many times depend on his or 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.

Supervisors are expected to turn negative situations into positive ones whenever possible, keep problems in perspective, and address them at the proper level in the Department. Effectively dealing with the negative can create loyalty and commitment from the member in the future.

The most effective tools supervisors can use are setting good examples, coaching, counseling, encouraging, nudging, directing and other supporting

actions. In fact, to prevent major problems, regular coaching and counseling is critical. However, a sustained history of unsatisfactory performance by a member must be documented by the supervisor(s). It is usually not necessary for a member to suffer monetarily, physically or mentally when solving a problem, even if it makes the supervisor feel better.

**All Department supervisors must remember that punishment, in and of itself, will not usually modify behavior. The supervisor must provide re-education and modeling to get a positive change in behavior.**

If you are going to punish a member, but not dismiss him/her, take appropriate action to be positive after the event and help manage and direct the member's re-entry into the Department. This concept and responsibility is very important in the system. If a particular member is going to be retained after a problem has occurred, this is usually the case. There should be a defined process to provide a "way back," a way to be whole again.

This "way back" may be a little different each time, but will usually require not only empathy and acceptance by the leaders and other members of the Department, but a behavioral change on the part of the particular member trying to "get back in." Supervisors should make this issue a regular consideration in the problem-solving process, and provide whatever guidance and/or counseling that is require to make this re-entry a success for all concerned, so that the system and the individuals involved can put the situation behind them and go on. Not doing so may plant "organizational cancers" throughout the Department over a period of time. Remember, **friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.**

This is also true for organizations. **In most organizations it is common for supervisors to avoid problem people. This is poor practice. In fact, supervisors should make a point of spending time with problem people.** You have to supervise people who you don't like and people who you do like. When dealing with these delicate situations, attempt to address the "bottom line" issues and you'll get to the root of the real problems that stand in the way of effective relationships. A supervisor who attempts to be diagnostic with the work group in order to head-off problems before they occur will find that very few situations will get to the point where formal supervisory action is required. 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 with the problem. This helps minimize supervisors appearing to simply be messengers 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 the Department within the community and the fire service.**

There are many leaders in the Leander Fire Department. Some are formal leaders who have this responsibility not only because of their structured positions in the Department, but usually also because of demonstrated ability. Others are informal leaders who do not hold structured positions of leadership in the Department, 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 Department. As a leader, you are always setting an example, whether intentionally or not. This example may be good or bad, but its' always there. Leaders should periodically ask themselves whether their words or actions at a given time are undermining their ability to address future situations or problems that they may encounter with members of the Department. 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 in the Department 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 Department. 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. Someone once said, "If you condone it, you own it."

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 toward solving the immediate problem, but also improving the situation for the future. This not only helps improve the particular situation encountered, but also teaches other current (and future) leaders in the Department a positive approach to problem solving. Problem solving techniques are hereditary. **It is an inherent responsibility of current Leander Fire Department leaders to develop and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future.**

After a leader has been involved in resolving a problem, he/she should attempt to objectively evaluate his/her effectiveness and apply what was learned from the experience to other situations in the future. It has been said that a leader's performance in a given situation will fall into one of three categories.

They are:

1. **POSITIVE** - The leader's involvement contributed to a positive, effective Outcome.
2. **NEUTRAL** - The leader's involvement had no effect on the outcome.
3. **NEGATIVE** - The leader's involvement actually made the situation worse.

Obviously, whenever possible, the leader would like to be rated in the "POSITIVE" category. This should be a performance goal for leaders throughout the Department. Others in non-leadership positions are going to rate you using this scale; you may as well use it also.

Another important element of effective leadership in the Department is effective "followership". Every leader is a follower in some other departmental group, 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 followership, and don't do things to your boss or leaders that you wouldn't want people you're responsible for (your followers) to do to you.** As was previously said, these roles are extremely important in the overall scheme of things organizationally, and should not be taken lightly or for granted.

## 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 decided in the Leander Fire Department that we did not have to create a work atmosphere that unnecessarily contributed to this difficulty. We recruit/hire our members with the expectation that, barring some unusual set of circumstances, they will remain members for most of their adult work life. They should be encouraged to devote their energies to improving their performance and the system in general, rather than being overly concerned about the basic security needs of surviving life.

Unless jobs are eliminated because of monetary reasons, members can be secure in knowing that if they consistently behave and perform, they will remain employed. Maintaining this environment requires a high level of commitment by all members to make it effective. It is far from a "good ol' 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 the Department 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 in the Leander Fire Department.

Knowing this, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to operate the Department with the level of employee involvement that is required to consistently process change and improvement in the programs, procedures and systems, without realizing that the employee has a legitimate role to play.

A good guideline has become, **“Process the issues on which there is agreement, and continue to work on the others.”** Some things simply take more time and energy than others. What seemed like a bad idea at one point in time may become a good idea later, and vice versa. Change, our ability to identify the need for it and to adapt to it organizationally and individually is key to our continued success. Not all changes will work out, but if we are afraid or unwilling to try new ideas, our organization will diminish over time.

There are really 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 of 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 Department really feels about you. It can also be said that when the Department is in trouble, it may find out how the members really feel about it. **One thing is for sure, if we are going to enjoy the good times that come with being a Leander Fire Department member, then we must come together and endure the bad times that also come with the affiliation.** When we become members, we, for the most part, give up our ability to misbehave in an independent manner. We may all suffer in the community for the actions of one of us. Remembering this should help guide our conduct at all times.

Some organizations define authority as a measure of how much you can punish somebody or how much organizational pain you can inflict on a person who has

misbehaved or is determined to be out of step with the organization. Fortunately, this is not the definition “Webster” or the Leander Fire Department subscribes to. There is no doubt that in the work environment, some people may periodically require discipline to modify their behavior. This, however, is not the principal measure of authority. Authority is much more dynamic and complex than that. In fact, **authority is recognized as “the ability to influence a person’s behavior or performance without the apparent exertion of force.”** It has become evident in our Department that the amount of respect a particular leader and/or supervisor is able to gain and sustain from the members is directly proportionate to his/her ability to understand and balance the issues of authority, influence and leadership when carrying out his/her responsibilities and performing within his/her designated roles. 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 Department, we may never get his/her commitment back. People have feelings, and their feelings must be taken into consideration when making decisions on their employment status. On the other hand, members must not mistake or misinterpret this compassionate, empathetic approach as weakness on the part of the supervisor. The environment is fragile and is at risk when dealing with people problems within the Department. One tool that we all have to fall back on is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP can be a valuable resource in preventing problems in the first place and in resolving problems in which standard forms of supervisory actions have not been effective. When members need it, they should use it.

## Section Seven

### Establishing Individual Expectations and Roles

**The Leander Fire Department is not perfect, and nobody said it was.**

**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 Leander Fire Department members are to perform, behave, treat each other and interact, no matter what level they are at 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 the Department. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the Department 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 our Department. 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 the Leander Fire Department. If we dwell on these imperfections, raise them above all the exceptional things occurring in the Department, 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 along.

**You are not just an employee/volunteer here, you are a member.** Whether performing a line function, working as a staff-support person, or administration, 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 everyone else. Being nice to one another is absolutely required to sustain the level of service to our customers that we have caused them to expect and that they deserve. Avoiding the use of terms like “us” and “they” (unless you can identify specifically who “they” are) will help sustain unity within the Department. Hazing new members or being disrespectful toward 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. The Department 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 this Department better than we found it.** We have the responsibility to pass along to future generations the innovations, values, knowledge and determination that moves our Department forward, and to personally give back to an organization that has given each member so much over the years, and continues to do so.

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 the Leander Fire Department.

**We are all members of the Department by choice. Nobody forced us to apply for our membership, nor does anyone force us to remain a member.**

To a great extent, it is that voluntary entry into a membership, a family, which attracts people to our Department. We are committed to excellence internally and externally, not 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 up what we are today, and through constant assessment and change, will sustain us in the future.

**You know the Leander Fire Department “Way.” Make a commitment to live it!**

## **RULES OF CONDUCT (This is Policy)**

The following list of directives along with the LFD Way represents the philosophy and conduct standards for members of the Leander Fire Department. The basis for these regulations is the following policy:

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

### **ALL MEMBERS SHALL:**

- Follow Operation Manuals and written directives of both the Leander Fire Department and the City of Leander.
- Use their training and capabilities to protect the public at all times, both on and off duty.
- Work competently in their positions to cause all department programs to operate effectively.
- Always conduct themselves to reflect credit on the Department.
- Supervisor will manage in an effective, considerate manner/subordinates will follow instructions in a positive, cooperative manner.
- Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the Department.
- Keep themselves informed to do their jobs effectively.
- Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare.
- Operate safely and use good judgment.
- Keep themselves physically fit.
- Observe the work hours of their position.
- Obey the law.
- Be careful of Department equipment and property.

### **MEMBERS SHALL NOT:**

- Engage in any activity that is detrimental to the Department.
- Engage in a conflict of interest to the Department or use their position with the Department for personal gain or influence.
- Fight.
- Abuse their sick leave.
- Steal.
- Use alcoholic beverages, debilitating drugs, or any substance that could impair their physical or mental capacities while on duty.
- Engage in any sexual activity while on duty.

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