
321 POLICY: Discipline Sanctions, Volunteer Members

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321.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes disciplinary guidelines for volunteer members. It is the responsibility of all members to accept compliance with organizational rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines; maintain a professional conduct while performing activities in and out of the fire District.

The scope of activities under which disciplinary action may be considered for a department member includes but is not limited to emergency/incident response, training, service details, public relations and public education; activities involving OIFR apparatus and equipment or occurring on properties owned or leased by San Juan County Fire District #2; other activities which negatively impact the mission and health of Orcas Island Fire & Rescue.

321.2 POLICY

It is the policy of Orcas Island Fire & Rescue to identify a member offense and provide corrective action using these disciplinary guidelines.

321.2.1 Supervision

All Orcas Island Fire & Rescue officers are directed to participate in an organized disciplinary process for the department. If an incident occurs necessitating disciplinary action, the direct supervisor of the member will administer the discipline, document the incident, and forward the information up the Chain of Command. The direct supervisor of the member will depend on the environment in which the offense occurs: emergency scene, training, or general activities when directly or indirectly representing SJC FD#2.

The Fire Chief or Battalion Chief shall be responsible to relieve or suspend from active status any firefighter for disobedience, insubordination, violation of any rules, regulations, or Organizational Guidelines of the department; or, if the member is deemed incapable of performing the required duties. The suspension will be reviewed by the Fire Chief and, if needed, other Command/Administrative staff. A determination will then be made about the length of the suspension and a plan will be written for renewing the member status after the suspension.

321.2.2 Offense

Any action by an OIFR member violating established OIFR policies, procedures or guidelines. Action constituting defiance of or failure to carry out directives or orders issued by OIFR officers (except when compliance with these orders or directives is a direct safety issue or may cause imminent danger to life or limb). Action causing or potentially causing injury or property damage, harmful or potentially harmful to the public image of OIFR or constituting a criminal offense. Conviction of a felony in a court of law, regardless of whether the precipitous act is related to department activities, will also be considered an offense against OIFR/SJC FD#2. Action which negatively impacts the mission and health of Orcas Island Fire & Rescue.

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321.2.3 Offense Considerations

- a. Minor Offenses (includes but not limited to): Offenses which are not likely to cause harm to personnel or property damage, could not be considered criminal in nature, and/or do not constitute purposeful defiance of OIFR policy or orders and directives issued by OIFR officers.
- b. Major Offenses (includes but not limited to): Offenses which are likely to cause harm to personnel or property damage, may be considered criminal in nature, and/or constitute purposeful defiance of OIFR policy or orders and directives issued by OIFR officers.

321.3 DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING OFFENSES

- a. Any OIFR member may report an offense by another OIFR member by filing a complaint within the Chain of Command.
- b. Upon receipt of a complaint, the direct supervisor of the member filing the complaint and the direct supervisor of the other member will initiate an investigation of the alleged offense.
 - 1. At minimum, the investigation will include interviews with the member filing the complaint and the member accused of the alleged offense but should be as extensive as needed to determine the validity of the complaint and the nature and severity of the offense, if any is found to have occurred.
 - 2. Under no circumstances shall any member filing a complaint or accused of an offense participate in the investigation process. In the event this rule affects the supervising officers' ability to participate in the investigation, the next appropriate officer within the Chain of Command or an administrative designee will be assigned to the investigation.
- c. Upon completion of the investigation, the supervising officers will make a written report on the findings of the investigation to the on-duty Battalion Chief. Depending on the severity of the complaint and scope of the investigation, the Fire Chief may need to be informed of and participate in the oversight of the investigation.
 - 1. At minimum, the written report will include a determination of whether or not an offense occurred for which sanction is indicated, the type of offense which occurred (if any), recommendations for sanction (if indicated), and a summary of the activities and facts revealed during the investigation.
- d. Upon completion of the investigation report, the supervising officer of the accused member and the Fire Chief or his/her designee will determine and execute the course of action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- e. All documentation related to a finding that an offense has occurred will be placed in the member's personnel file.

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321.4 AVAILABLE SANCTIONS

- a. **Verbal Caution:** Offense is addressed in an informal meeting between the member and an OIFR officer and may be documented by that officer. A verbal caution is a corrective action taken by a supervising officer to address a safety concern, procedural anomaly, or behavioral/conduct issue. A verbal caution may be documented to help identify the need for improvement for the individual receiving the Caution or to identify the need for improvement with District rules, regulations, procedures, guidelines, or practices. A Verbal Caution is a non-punitive action but two or more documented Verbal Cautions may be grounds for a Written Warning.

The documentation of a Verbal Caution may be kept in a member's personnel file for one year or less.

- b. **Written warning:** Offense is addressed in a formal meeting between the member and two OIFR officers, one of whom must be a Battalion Chief. A Written Warning is documented via formal disciplinary report by the Battalion Chief conducting the meeting. The documentation of a Written Warning may be kept in a member's personnel file for up to one year or greater.
- c. **Suspension:** Offense is addressed by removing the member from all volunteer duties and response activity for a period of time established by a Battalion Chief or the Fire Chief. During the period of suspension, the member will return all District property which they have in their possession, including but not limited to, pager, radio, medical equipment, uniforms, PPE and department records. The member shall not be on properties owned or leased by SJC FD#2, be in attendance at any OIFR activities, or participate in any training under the auspices of OIFR. Suspension is documented via formal disciplinary report by a Battalion Chief or the Fire Chief.
- d. **Termination:** Offense is addressed by terminating the member's volunteer status with Orcas Island Fire & Rescue. Termination is documented via formal disciplinary report and letter of termination by the Fire Chief.

321.5 PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary actions are not required to be followed in any specific order and may be administered accordingly due to the severity of the member actions/activities and the consequences/impact to the mission and health of the organization.

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321.6 GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SANCTIONS

- a. Verbal warning is generally reserved for minor offenses.
- b. The minimum sanction for a major offense should generally be a written warning.
- c. A repeat offense should be resolved with more severe sanction than was imposed for the preceding offense of that type, but any sanction of increased severity may be chosen.
- d. Performance Improvement Plan (behavior modification/ expectations) may be required after any sanction in order to provide clear direction for improvement and will have a specified time frame for this to occur. A follow-up meeting will then be conducted to review behavior performance and identify if the PIP is complete or needs to be adjusted or if another disciplinary sanction is warranted.
- e. Accumulation of two major offenses in any period of five years or less may be considered grounds for immediate removal from duty.
- f. The following shall be considered grounds for immediate removal from duty:
 1. Felony conviction of any type or commission of a felonious act on properties owned or leased by or while acting under the auspices of OIFR, regardless of conviction.
 2. Theft of or intentional damage to OIFR property or member property stored on properties owned or leased by SJC FD#2.
 3. Major offense resulting in serious injury to, or death of, another member or civilian
 4. Sexual misconduct (See Policy #342).