

Central Pierce Fire & Rescue

Philosophy and Culture



Mission Statement

The mission of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is to quickly, skillfully and compassionately respond to the needs of our diverse communities by safely providing:

Fire Suppression

Emergency Medical Services

Rescue

Hazardous Materials Mitigation

Public Information and Education

Prevention and Code Compliance

Executive Summary

This document was prepared by members of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue to summarize the philosophy of this exceptional group of people. This document is intended to guide the relationships of all current and future members to ensure that we continue to reinforce the Department's philosophy in our day-to-day relationships 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.

At Central Pierce we strive for excellence. Ours is a group with selective membership, 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 fellow members and are concerned with preserving the well-being of our organization, because it serves the common good of the members and the public.

It is our goal to provide the best possible service to those we are here to serve. The philosophy described in this document is intended to maximize our ability to consistently achieve this goal.

Leadership is critical in maintaining the high standards of performance and the positive image of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue within the community and the fire service. Leadership responsibility, whether formal or informal, is a determining factor in the overall effectiveness and well-being of our Department. All fire department leaders 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 our Department. It is an inherent responsibility of current Central Pierce Fire & Rescue leaders to develop and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future that live and practice the Central Pierce Philosophy and Culture.

Each member must accept the responsibility associated with maintaining a productive work 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.

True commitment requires loyalty to the organization. Commitment is easy during the good times but is truly tested during difficult times. Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is not perfect, but it is up to us to strive to make it better. Members are responsible to 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 Central Pierce Fire & Rescue, have made the decision to commit to making this change a positive and healthy experience for our members and the public.

The Central Pierce 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 capacity of our members. We must be able to recognize organizational problems and imperfections as opportunities to continue to improve and not dwell on them to the point of missing the other positive aspects of the organization.

The responsibility to learn and practice this philosophy lies with each individual. Members make a conscious choice to belong. With this membership must come a commitment to excellence internally and externally. It is this positive commitment that has made us what we are today, and through constant assessment and change will sustain us in the future.

Philosophy and Culture

Section One – Making the Commitment

Being a member of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is more than just a job; it includes a commitment to other department members and to our citizens.

Our Department is made up of members from various economic and social backgrounds. We have in common the sincere desire to serve our citizens. As a team of professionals and volunteers, we are dedicated to excellence in meeting our mission. We are committed to using our training and expertise to protect the public at all times. We strive for excellence in literally every contact with our customers, whether inside or 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.

There is no doubt that the most important resource that our Department has is the membership. No matter what position an individual fills in the Department, he or she is considered important and is to be treated as such.

This document exists for all members of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue. **Read it carefully.** You will be asked to accept this philosophy as the general description of the way we want our system to operate, the way we are expected to act, and the way we expect to be treated.

Section Two – Responsibility for Ourselves and to Each Other

Each individual member of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is responsible and accountable for their actions and, to some extent, for the well-being of other members.

The Department's Labor Management Team 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. **Safe:** Members' safety (physically and emotionally) is of the highest priority. Each member accepts the responsibility associated with maintaining a safe working environment and emotional climate.
2. **Valued:** Appreciate and recognize each member as unique, and accept the fact that every member brings a different perspective. Encourage each other to identify their role in the advancement of departmental discussions, decisions, and solutions. Treat each member in a manner as to engender trust and support strong relationships.
3. **Compassionate:** Identifying with and/or willingness to understand another's situation, feelings, and intentions. Compassion is a key to establishing durable relationships.
4. **Empowered:** Members continually seek to invest time and energy (give back) in assuring the successful completion of the organization's goal. Be willing to encourage others to join in and contribute regardless of their rank or position.

All members of our Department are expected to demonstrate 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. The "Golden Rule" (***Do unto others as you would have them do unto you***) is alive and well at Central Pierce Fire & Rescue in matters of external customer service and internal relations.

Members have a right to be different as long as their behavior, appearance, and job performance are not in conflict with the rules, 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.

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 their own performance.

Each member's stature in the organization will be reinforced by their conduct and performance. There are some things you must do for yourself. No system can overcome a particular member's lack of personal respect for himself or herself or respect for others. To simplify this statement, you will only receive the respect that you earn no matter what your formal position is in the system. **Your reputation is a valuable possession; guard it and remember: it starts the day you join our 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 position, productive, and healthy position within the Department.

Once established, a positive work relationship is maintained by commitment and self-discipline. Members are expected to manage their own behavior in a manner that conforms to the Rules and Regulations of the Department, and in essence, should require 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.

A 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 will have no place in our Department.

Section Four – The Supervisors Role

Supervisors play an important role in the overall scheme of things in the Department. Effectiveness is defined by the way they carry out their responsibilities.

All supervisors, regardless of rank, 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 is a powerful motivating force, 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 highly effective.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for a person to out-perform their 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 may be exaggerated. In order for supervisors to consistently solve problems in a positive manner, they must take a creative, flexible approach to problems 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 their ability to put the responsibility for the solution back on the member, and 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 a good example, coaching, counseling, encouraging, and other supportive actions. In fact, to prevent major problems, regular coaching and counseling are 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. **All supervisors must remember that punishment, in and of itself, will not usually modify behavior.** If you are going to punish a member but not discuss 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 is very important in the system. If a particular member is going to be retained after a problem has occurred, as is the desired outcome; 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 compassion 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 required to make this re-entry a success for all concerned. This way the system and the individuals involved can put the situation behind them and move on. Not doing so may plant "organization discontent" throughout the Department over a period of time.

Remember: Issues will pass, but enemies will last. This is also true for organizations. **In most organizations it is common for supervisors to avoid difficult employees. This is a poor practice. In fact, supervisors should make a point of spending more time with difficult employees.** You have to supervise both challenging and non-challenging employees. 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 proactively 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 in the problems. 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 leadership positions in Central Pierce Fire & Rescue. Some are formal leaders who have this responsibility, not only because of their structured positions in the Department, 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 members as leaders just the same. This leadership responsibility, whether formal or informal, is a critical element in the overall effectiveness and well-being of the Department. Leaders set examples, whether intentionally or not. This example may be good or bad, but it is 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 their 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. This leaves 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 within our 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. It has been 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 towards 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 Central Pierce Fire & Rescue leaders to develop and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future.**

After a leader has been involved in resolving a problem, he or she should attempt to objectively evaluate their 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. **EFFECTIVE** - The leader's involvement contributed to a positive, effective outcome.
2. **INEFFECTIVE** - The leader's involvement had no effect on the outcome.
3. **NEGATIVE** – The leader's involvement actually made the situation worse.

Naturally, leaders would like to be rated in the "EFFECTIVE" category. This should be a performance goal for leaders throughout the Department.

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 – Establishing Individual Expectations and Roles

Central Pierce Fire & Rescue 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 Central Pierce Fire & Rescue members are to perform, behave, treat each other and interact no matter what level they attain during their careers. Living this philosophy is not

easy. As a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult and requires a deliberate commitment and conscious effort on the part of all of us each and every day of our lives. 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.

It is important we not dwell on Department impurities. In fact, sometimes they can provide the clues we need to direct change and create improvement in the system. If we recognize imperfections as opportunities to continue improving, then we can keep them in perspective and positively effect change in our organization.

We each have the responsibility to leave this Department better than we found it in some way. We have the responsibility to pass along to future generations the traditions, values, knowledge and determination that have moved 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. **We are all members of the Department by choice. Nobody forced us to apply for our membership, nor does anyone internally force us to remain a member.** To a great extent, it is that voluntary entry into a membership – a team – that attracts people to our Department. We are committed to excellence internally and externally. It is our positive commitment to quality service and to each other that has made us what we are today and through constant vigilance will sustain us in the future. **Central Pierce Philosophy and Culture – make a commitment to live it.**

Code of Conduct

The following list of directives represents the conduct standards for members of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue.

Every member of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is expected to operate in a highly self-disciplined manner and is responsible to regulate their own conduct in a positive, productive and mature way. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action ranging from counseling to dismissal.

MEMBERS SHALL:

1. Follow rules, regulations, policies, directives and guidelines of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue.
2. Use their training and capabilities to serve the public at all times.
3. Always conduct themselves to reflect well on the Department.
4. Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the Department.
5. Keep themselves informed to do their jobs effectively.
6. Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare.
7. Operate safely and use good judgment.
8. Keep themselves mentally and physically fit for duty.
9. Observe the work hours of their position.
10. Show pride in Department equipment and property.

MEMBERS SHALL NOT:

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

***These expectations and commitments of
accountability are founded on the core values of
Central Pierce Fire & Rescue.***

COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Commitment to excellence is the spirit of determination and dedication found in our members. It inspires unrelenting resolve to achieve and sustain a standard of excellence in every endeavor.

HONOR

Honor guides our members to exemplify ethical and moral behavior with uncompromising integrity and respect for human dignity.

COURAGE

Courage is the inner strength that enables us to do what is right and to make tough decisions under stress and pressure. It carries us through challenges and helps to overcome fear.

**We, the members, proudly serve our community
with honor, courage and commitment.
This is the standard by which we live.**

Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service

- ❖ **Our essential mission and number one priority is to deliver the best possible service to our customers.**
- ❖ **Always be nice – treat everyone with respect, kindness, patience and consideration.**
- ❖ **Always attempt to execute a standard problem solving outcome; quick / effective / skillful / safe / caring / managed.**
- ❖ **Regard everyone as a customer.**
- ❖ **Consider how and what you are doing looks to others.**
- ❖ **Don't disqualify the customer with your qualifications.**
- ❖ **Basic organizational behavior must become customer centered.**
- ❖ **We must continually improve our customer service performance.**