

Identifying and Correcting Deficiencies in the Discipline Policy and System of the Greentown
Fire Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The problem this study addressed was the lack of consistent administration of existing discipline procedures and policy, and the resulting negative effect on morale and leadership confidence that these cause. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe current progressive discipline practice and policy of the GVFD and some other fire departments in the Stark County area, as well as some ways GVFD could improve the content and administration of its progressive discipline practice and policy. Descriptive research was used to identify and describe the discipline policy of the Greentown Fire Department, and three research questions were asked: (1) what is the current practice and policy of GVFD regarding discipline of personnel? (2) What is the current practice and policy regarding discipline of personnel in some other fire departments in the Stark County area? (3) What are some ways that the Greentown Fire Department could improve its progressive discipline policy and the administration of that policy? A review of past disciplinary practice, current policy, and the results of a questionnaire that was administered to Greentown Fire Department personnel confirmed that there were areas of concern regarding the administration of discipline within the department. Additionally a questionnaire was administered to personnel from other area departments, it was found that personnel from those departments felt that their departments had similar areas of concern; however, in most cases, they rated their departments handling of discipline higher than members of Greentown Fire Department rated theirs. Recommendations included utilizing a committee made up of members of the department to update the discipline policy to meet the current needs of the department; distributing the discipline policy and all policies to all members in writing; having trainings on the policies at least annually and whenever a policy is updated; training the officers that are tasked with administering discipline to ensure fair and consistent administration; and to establish a documentation system that ensures discipline is administered in a consistent manner.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this descriptive research addressed was the lack of consistent administration of existing discipline procedures and policy within the GVFD, the unaddressed opportunities for improvement in the discipline procedures and policy, and the resulting negative effect on morale and leadership confidence that these cause.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the current progressive discipline practice and policy of the GVFD, the current progressive discipline practice and policy of some other fire departments in the Stark County area, and some ways GVFD could improve the contents and administration of its progressive discipline practiced and policy.

Research Questions

The research questions this descriptive research study will investigate are:

1. What is the current practice and policy of GVFD regarding discipline of personnel?
2. What is the current practice and policy regarding discipline of personnel in some other fire departments in the Stark County area?
3. What are some ways that the Greentown Fire Department could improve its progressive discipline policy, and the administration of that policy?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Greentown Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1939 and has evolved from a system of all volunteer members to its current combination volunteer/part-time status. The department is a private, not-for-profit organization that is overseen by a nine-member board of directors. Funding for the department is provided through a contract with the Lake Township Trustees (Appendix A) and through ambulance billing. The major step from an all-volunteer department to a combination volunteer/part-time department was taken in 2000, when the Lake Township Trustees disbanded its township-wide paramedic service. At this time, the township's three private fire companies, Greentown Volunteer Fire Department, Uniontown Fire Department, and Hartville Fire Department, were tasked with providing their own around-the-clock paramedic service. Currently, GVFD is made up of nine volunteers and thirty-one part-time employees (GVFD roster), with an annual call volume of 701 in 2012 (GVFD dispatch log).

The personnel resources of the department are governed by various documents contained in the employee handbook (GVFD Employee Handbook 1976- 2010) as well as all applicable local, state, and federal employment laws. The handbook is made up of multiple sections that include: "Volunteer and Employee Personnel Guide," "Standard Operating Procedures," and "Policies." Some of these documents date back to 1976, and some are as new as 2010. In addition to procedures and policies found in this book, there have been several policies and directives that have been issued in memo form and which are not kept in one centralized place. The written progressive discipline policy that is in place was written in 2001 and is contained in Chapter 14 of this handbook (Appendix B). The policy lists various levels of discipline from verbal counseling through suspension with recommendation for dismissal. The written discipline

policy does not stipulate what constitutes a given level of discipline. This is also the case with all other policies with the exception to the policies regarding tardy and attendance, which have specific discipline levels written within the policy. The attendance policy has exact levels of discipline for each offense, up to and including termination. The tardy policy also has specific levels of discipline for each offense; however, unlike the attendance policy, in the tardy policy the duration of the suspension that is given can be determined by the Chief. Section 14.4 of the disciplinary policy also allows for all discipline to be appealed to the board of directors within 72 hours after the employee has received notice of the Chief's final determination. Standards of conduct are covered in chapter 18 of the employee handbook (Appendix C): this chapter gives several examples of things for which an employee could be disciplined. It also contains a disclaimer, which states "Sections are not intended to be all inclusive, and the fire department reserves the right to impose disciplinary action of its choosing arising from other behavior and situations not listed below, as it deems appropriate"(Standards of Conduct, 2001, p. 1). In 2010, the researcher was a member of the management team which updated several of the department's policies. At that time, the idea of making a tiered discipline policy based on a wide range of possible infractions was considered; however, it was not explored in great detail.

The current progressive discipline policy does not take into account that GVFD is a combination department; therefore, a suspension does not affect the volunteer or part-time member in the same manner. The policy also does not take into account that some members work a minimum number of hours in a given time period, where as others work the maximum allowable amount of hours in the same amount of days. Therefore, a suspension of an equal number of days would have a greater impact on certain employees than on others.

This study will identify possible negative trends related to the administration of the current disciplinary system, it will also describe how or if the consistent administration and documentation of a comprehensive progressive disciplinary policy would counteract possible negative trends. *The potential impact this study could have on the Greentown Volunteer Fire Department is; the possible implementation of a new progressive discipline policy and an overhaul of the entire disciplinary system.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

If one were to look up the word discipline in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013), they would indeed see that one definition for the word is, “punishment”; they would however also see that another definition is, “training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character”. While reviewing literature for this study, it was found that many authors would agree that discipline can be used positively to effect a member’s behavior, and should help the employee to develop professionally. Fleming (2011) notes that, “Your intent in administering discipline will normally be to encourage the self-correction of unacceptable behavior on the part of the fire department members” (p. 140). Gasaway (2007) addresses the subject by simply saying “Remember, the purpose of disciplinary action is to change behavior, not to punish.”(Improvement). Cornell (2003) echoed these sentiments, as well as expanding on them when she noted some of the important aspects of progressive discipline. The author stated that, “...if correctly designed and administered, a progressive discipline program has the potential to do more than change individual behavior. Progressive discipline can increase professionalism, improve morale, improve manager/employee relations and foster long-term positive change” (Cornell, (2003), Clear expectations, para.1).

As part of the development and implementation of a progressive discipline policy, the sources reviewed generally recommend a four-step process which progresses in order from least severe to most: verbal warning, written warning, suspension and termination. Snook, Gasaway and Holman (2011) explain each level in detail. First they describe a verbal warning as “a stern discussion about the behavior, along with informing the member that this discussion constitutes the first step of progressive disciplinary action”. They go on to describe the verbal warning to

“include an element of coaching that provides an explanation as to why the behavior is undesirable and what the member should do to correct it”. The authors then describe the written warning as the next step when a verbal warning does not bring about the desired change. They state that a “written warning should also include written counseling that explains why the behavior is undesirable and what the member should do to correct it” and that “providing the expectation of desired behavior in writing may improve the chance of bringing about the desired change in behavior”. The authors describe a suspension as “a short-term separation from the department, providing the volunteer with time to reflect on his or her behavior”. Finally, when all efforts to change an employee’s behavior have failed, they describe termination as the “final step in the formal disciplinary process” (Snook, Gasaway, and Holman 2011, p. 86-87).

Although the premise of progressive discipline is to progress from the least to most severe discipline, there are instances where steps can be skipped. In some instances when a member commits a severe infraction, he could be terminated without any previous discipline. IFSTA (2007) addresses this by saying “even in an organization using progressive discipline, a sufficiently serious first offense (theft, assault, gross negligence, etc.) may result in termination” (p. 306). When discussing immediate termination, Antonellis (2012) concurs with IFSTA’s stance by saying, “some behaviors are so serious or heinous as to warrant immediate termination, and the employer may in such a case have limited documentation on the employee’s behavior beyond the single incident” (p. 173). Flemming (2011) reiterates this stance by saying, “There are also critical offenses that may rightfully result in immediate discharge rather than the utilization of the progressive discipline penalties. It is important that such infractions be clearly articulated in your department’s progressive discipline policies and procedures” (p. 142).

On the subject of developing a disciplinary policy, Snook et al. (2011) writes that, “A written progressive disciplinary action policy lets everyone know what to expect when they behave improperly,” and that “the existence of fair and well-written policies makes the administration of discipline more enforceable”(p. 84). Fleming (2011) expanded on this by saying that one should “Develop and implement a progressive discipline process and procedure that meets the needs of your department in terms of encouraging desired behavior and compliance with behavioral expectation” (p. 142). It is recommended by Antonellis (2012) that when writing policies on discipline, that labor unions and groups of employees be used to establish and review the policies. He states that “the process is better received” and that “when employees understand the need for policies and are involved in the process, they are more inclined to support the department policies” (Antonellis, 2012, p. 170). In his recommendations for building a positive discipline system DelCampo (2011) recommends that “the organization must set clear, obtainable, and well-communicated rules” (DelCampo, 2011, p. 163). Snook et al. (2011) also makes recommendations of what they believe should be included in a progressive discipline policy. They list the following:

- Appropriate standards of conduct
- Written job descriptions outlining expectations, duties, and performance standards
- Steps in the disciplinary process
- Notice that the steps of the disciplinary process may be skipped based on the severity of the infraction
- The length of time that a disciplinary action remains a part of the member’s record (p. 84-85)

Although these authors recommend that clear rules should be set, IFSTA (2007) points out that not every possible circumstance will be covered by a specific rule, by saying, “not every possible violation by an employee must be covered by a specific policy or regulation. Most SOPs/SOGs include a general duty clause that simply prohibits actions or behaviors that are considered unprofessional or inappropriate” (p. 307).

In addition to the initial development of a progressive discipline policy, it is recommended that policies be reviewed and updated as necessary to keep them relevant to the current state of the department. Cornell (2003) addresses this by saying “as times change, so do the rules of the game. Don’t be afraid to change the rules as they become outdated” (After the review, para.3). She further reiterates this sentiment by saying that “creating a truly fair and equitable disciplinary system is an ongoing and evolving process that will more than reward you with higher moral, improved labor-management relations, higher productivity and a legally sound department”(Cornell, 2003, After the review, para.7). Antonellis (2012) warns of the importance of updating policies by stating that “One danger that all fire departments face is the lack of not conducting a policy update/edit” (p. 168). He explains this position by saying that “Having policies that are not followed will work against the department’s interest and may open the department up to further litigation. The fire department handbook should not include any policy by which the department is not going to abide” (, p. 168).

Several of the authors whose literature was reviewed for this research project advocate that in addition to a discipline policy having been established and updated, it needs to be communicated to the department’s employees. When discussing complaints that center on discipline, Cornell (2003) notes that one of the key complaints is often that “employees may not be clear what constitutes a rule infraction” (para.3). In his key steps in to a formal progressive

disciplinary process, Gasaway (2007) states that you should “make sure the policy is well communicated to all members. This includes not only giving everyone a copy of the policy but also going over the policy at a department wide meeting to ensure that everyone understands the policy” (Key steps). Antonellis (2012) recommends that the department provides copies of its policies to its members, and that the members should sign to acknowledge receipt of the policies, annually. However, he goes on to say that this practice is “not ample” and that “the department should be also conducting training session on the policies, to show the employees and supervisors what are the acceptable behaviors for the department” (p. 171).

Once a discipline policy has been developed and communicated to all members, the implementation of the policy must be applied in a fair and consistent manner. DelCampo (2011) notes that managers must ensure that, “employees receive fair and consistent treatment, meaning that each employee is treated in the same manner regardless of his or her rank, tenure, or political savvy” (p. 163). He continues on to explain that if supervisors are not trained to handle discipline in this manner it could result in litigation. Antonellis (2012) also speaks to the importance of consistency in discipline as it relates to litigation in saying, “there must also be consistency in the application of the disciplinary action; inconsistency can result in cases being overturned” (p. 162). Cornell (2003) speaks of inconsistency in discipline as a mistake that can undermine a progressive discipline system when she says that “dealing with rule infractions on a case-by-case basis can leave the impression, often accurately, that each individual will be dealt with differently”(Clear expectations). Antonellis (2012) speaks of the importance of consistency in discipline when he explains that a discipline policy that is uniformly applied should help to minimize the need for discipline because the members will be more willing to follow and support the policy (p. 168). Finally, on the issue of consistency in discipline Antonellis (2012) notes that

“When firefighters see that others are treated differently or that it takes a long time for discipline issues to be addressed, the organization, morale, and the case may be affected” (p. 169).

As noted in the previous paragraph, timeliness in discipline is inextricably linked with the consistency of discipline. Flemming (2011) notes that, “the timely and effective resolution of disciplinary matters is crucial to your success as a fire chief and also to that of your department” (p. 139). When speaking of problems that can arise from a delay in discipline, Bacal (2011) notes that “the reason why delay is problematic is that it sends a message that undesirable behavior will be accepted or even not noticed” (Error #3). The author goes on to explain what happens when this has been allowed to occur for some time and then discipline must be applied, “Non-progressive measures (harsh initial action), when applied to a long time, but not addressed problem, often seem too harsh by the employee, and on occasion, by their coworkers” (Bacal, 2011, Error #4). In discussing timeliness in discipline, and in disciplinary investigations, Antonellis (2012) recommends beginning immediately. He says “it is highly recommended that discipline investigations begin immediately; any delay in starting an official investigation may later be used to show that the department did not see the matter as serious” (p. 162).

Nearly every author whose work was reviewed for this study speaks of the importance of documentation in any disciplinary action. Snook et al. (2011) recommend that every step in the disciplinary process should be documented and that the member should be required to sign the document to acknowledge receipt of the disciplinary action (Snook et al., 2011, p. 86). In addition to being used as a record of the incident, these authors also recommend using the documentation as an explanation to the employee of the undesirable behavior and of what should be done to correct it (Snook et al.). Antonellis (2012) also recommends using documentation to inform the employee of the corrections needed and of the consequences of not making those

corrections. He also recommends that the employee be given a copy of the documentation as well as having the employee sign for receipt of the documentation (p. 167). This author also lists “poorly documented incidents (no report or a minimal written report)” as one area that often causes fire departments trouble as related to discipline (p. 168). DelCampo (2011) finds documentation to be so important that he lists documentation of facts as one of his three basic standards of discipline for all rule violations (p. 164). This author also speaks to the importance of documentation in an instance when an employee needs to be dismissed. He says that “Properly managing the discipline process not only allows firms to improve their employees’ performance but also provides a documented “paper trail” to help protect them from potential unfair dismissal claims” (DelCampo, p. 171).

The findings from the reviewed material indicate that the manner in which discipline is administered can affect the morale of the department’s personnel both positively, if administered properly, and negatively, if administered improperly. It is noted that the way in which discipline administration is perceived has effects on the morale of department personnel. The findings indicate that the lack of consistent application of discipline can have a negative effect on the morale of department personnel. Multiple sources indicate that a discipline policy needs to be well-written in order to be administered properly, and that department members must be made aware of the rules which they are responsible for following, as well as the ramifications of choosing not to follow those rules. Multiple sources also speak to the important role that documentation plays in the disciplinary process.

PROCEDURES

A review was conducted of GVFD's discipline policy and personnel discipline records, searching for opportunities for improvement where possible weaknesses and inconsistencies may exist. A literature review was also conducted of a wide range of relevant resources, due to the unique culture of the fire service, primary emphasis was placed on fire service related material. These publications included websites, books, and articles in both electronic and printed formats.

In addition to the reviewed literature, policies, and personnel records, two questionnaires have been constructed to survey individuals on discipline practices in their fire departments. The questionnaires were distributed via Survey Monkey, with the first (Appendix D) being sent to firefighters in other Stark County Fire departments and the second (Appendix E) to GVFD personnel.

Stark County has thirty-two fire departments of various sizes and configurations. The makeup of these departments range in membership from volunteer to part-time to full-time, with various combinations of the three. Ten of the thirty-two departments in Stark County that most closely mirror the operation of GVFD were asked to participate in the survey. The ten departments were chosen using the criteria of size and structure. The highest priority was placed on the department being a part-time/volunteer combination department, and then consideration was given to the department's size similarity to GVFD. The chiefs of each of these departments were contacted by telephone to request permission to allow their members to participate in the survey. All of the chiefs who were contacted agreed, and they were emailed the survey link and accompanying explanation letter (Appendix F). In the email they were asked to distribute the surveys to his members via email. At this time, the number of members to whom he would be distributing the survey to was ascertained so that the information was available for future data

comparison. Three of the departments did not have department-wide email available; the letter, with the survey link highlighted, was printed and taken to these departments for distribution via their member mail slots. Had a department declined to participate, the department that next closely met the above criteria would have been asked to participate. Combination departments that include full-time employees would have been included if additional departments had to have been selected that did not meet the above criteria. If the entire list of those meeting the above criteria had been exhausted, and there were less than eight departments that had agree to participate, the additional needed departments would have been selected at random from the remaining Stark County departments.

The survey that was distributed at GVFD was emailed to all 40 employees, and participation was strongly encouraged. This survey was very similar to the survey distributed to the other fire departments, with the exception of a few minor changes. The first change was the removal of a question related to the staffing makeup of the department. It was removed because the makeup of the department is already known. The second and third changes were made in the demographics section of the survey to help protect the identities of those being surveyed. One question asked the rank of the individual being surveyed; its choices were changed simply to *firefighter* or *officer*. Another change that was made on this survey, again in the demographics section to protect identities, was the highest year range of the survey taker: it was changed to reflect twenty-one years or more, instead of being broken down further. This was done because there are very few members with this many years of service, and it would be very easy to figure out who had responded to the surveys if it were broken down more. The last change that was made was the removal of the option of having the results of the survey emailed to the individual.

This was done both to protect the identity of the individuals surveyed, and also because the results are going to be made available to all GVFD personnel.

Information gained from the background and significance section, as well as data collected from the survey of GVFD personnel, was used to answer the first research question, which was: what is the current practice and policy of GVFD regarding discipline of personnel?

The data collected from the survey of other Stark county fire departments was used to answer the second question which was: what is the current practice and policy regarding discipline of personnel in some other fire departments in the Stark county area?

The information and data collected to answer the first two questions was combined with information gained through the literature review to make recommendations for answering the third question, which is: what are some ways that the Greentown Fire Department could improve its progressive discipline policy and the administration of that policy?

Limitations of the Study

A limitation that exists in regards to the first research question is the apparent lack of disciplinary documentation within Greentown Fire Department. Although this lack of documentation points to an area of concern that needs to be addressed in itself, it also makes it difficult to ensure an accurate history of disciplinary action within the department.

A limitation that exists regarding the second research question is that in order to get a complete representation of the current discipline practice and policy of the ten fire departments that were included in the survey, there would need to be an extensive examination of their personnel discipline records and policies, which would be outside of the scope of this study.

RESULTS

Descriptive research was done by reviewing past practices of the Greentown Fire Department, reviewing the employee handbook, reviewing industry-specific and non-industry-specific literature, and by surveying both GVFD department members and those of other Stark County Fire Departments of similar makeup, to answer three research questions. The results of this research, as it relates to these questions, are discussed in detail in this section.

Question 1: What is the current practice and policy of GVFD regarding discipline of personnel?

A review of the current disciplinary policy which is contained in Chapter 14 of the employee handbook (Appendix B) found that the policy lists various levels of discipline from verbal counseling through suspension with recommendation for dismissal. The written policy does not stipulate what constitutes a given level of discipline. The exceptions to this are the tardy and attendance policies, which have specific discipline levels written within the policy. The attendance policy has exact levels of discipline for each offense, up to and including termination. The tardy policy also has specific levels of discipline for each offense; however, unlike the attendance policy, in the tardy policy, the duration of the suspension that is given can be determined by the Chief. Section 14.4 of the disciplinary policy also allows for all discipline to be appealed to the board of directors within 72 hours after the employee has received notice of the Chief's final determination. Standards of conduct are covered in chapter 18 of the employee handbook, which gives several examples of things for which an employee could be disciplined. It also contains a disclaimer, which states "Sections are not intended to be all inclusive, and the

fire department reserves the right to impose disciplinary action of its choosing arising from other behavior and situations not listed below, as it deems appropriate”(Standards of Conduct).

A thorough review of personnel records was completed which looked at disciplinary actions dating from January 1st, 2007 through December 31st, 2012, in an attempt to further answer this first question. It revealed thirty-one disciplinary actions were documented during this same time frame. Eighteen of those thirty-one disciplinary actions were taken against three employees. The disciplinary actions can be further broken down into four categories by level of discipline and by the number of times each of these actions were taken. There were ten verbal (documented) warnings, nine written warnings, nine suspensions, and two terminations. Three of these suspensions were given in shifts (hours) off, five were given in days off, and one that indicates an employee was suspended, but does not document the length of the suspension. This would seem to indicate that there have been inconsistencies in how suspensions were applied, and at least one instance of insufficient documentation as it relates to a suspension.

During this time frame, fourteen of the disciplinary actions taken were for employees being either tardy or absent in excess of what is allowed by policy. Disciplinary documentation shows that there were four written warnings and three verbal warnings for absenteeism. This would seem to indicate that there may be missing documentation since the policy requires a verbal warning prior to a written warning. The reviewed documents also showed two suspensions for tardiness and only one written warning for tardiness; again, it appears that documentation may be missing because the policy requires a written warning for this offense prior to a suspension. Without supporting documentation, it is impossible to know whether there were inconsistencies in how this discipline was administered, or simply poor documentation.

Additionally, to assist in answering this first question, a survey was conducted which was designed to collect the opinions of GVFD personnel on several specific disciplinary topics as they related to discipline within the department. The survey was distributed to all department personnel which resulted in 31 completed surveys of the 39 surveys distributed, or an 80% rate of participation. All of those individuals who responded to the survey answered all questions. A summary of these results can be found below in the survey summary section, and full results can be found in Appendix G.

Question 2: What is the current practice and policy regarding discipline of personnel in some other fire departments in the Stark County area?

A second survey that was nearly identical to the one administered to GVFD personnel, was administered to members of ten other Stark county fire departments that have a similar makeup to Greentown Fire. This survey was designed to answer the second research question. The survey was distributed to 298 individuals with a response rate of just under 11% or thirty-two total responses. As with the first survey, all questions that required an opinion answer were formatted as a statement, and the responses were based on a ten point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree. The results of both surveys are found in the survey summary section below. Full results of both surveys can be found in Appendix G.

Survey Summary

The first fifteen questions of both surveys were identical and the summary of those questions follow; the remaining questions of each survey were demographics questions and the results can be found in Appendix G.

The first question on the survey stated, *there is a written discipline policy in my organization*. Of the GVFD officers that responded to this question 8 answered yes and 1 answered no; where as 36% of GVFD firefighters answered no or unknown to this question. Nearly 90% of all firefighters and officers from other departments answered yes to this question. Comments on this question that were offered from GVFD members included: “There are policies that allude to disciplinary action that are to be taken for certain offenses.”, “Depends on who you are as to how it is followed.”, “There are [*sic*] some entry level stuff but the progressive side of discipline seems to be nonexistent.”, “It’s piece meal [*sic*] through parts of the handbook.” and “Never seen it.” Some comments that were offered from members of other departments included: “Written policy is from an outdated employee handbook”, “Policies are always subject to change per Chief’s orders.” “Discipline policy is not always followed through.”, and “Very weak at following through.”

The second question stated, *in my organization there is a thoroughly written discipline policy*. The average response of all GVFD respondents was 5.82 with the average officer’s response considerably lower at 4.56. Transversely, the average response from members of other departments was 6.53 with a much higher average response by officers at 7.07. There were no comments offered from either survey for this question.

The third question stated, *in my organization, performance standards and acceptable behaviors are clearly communicated*. The average response from all GVFD members was 5.45 with officers giving an average lower response of 4.78. The average response of all respondents from other departments was 6.47 with less than one half of a point difference between the responses of firefighters and officers. There were no comments offered from GVFD members, but the following comments were offered from respondents from other departments: “I am on

two departments, one department this is very true, on the other department the performance standards are spelled out in writing but differ based on who you are. So the written standards are not usually adhered to unless you are liked.” “There could always be better communication.” “There have been cases where individual actions garnered individual, inconsistent reactions from administration based on whom the offender was.” “They change too often.”

The fourth question stated, *I am very familiar with my departments current discipline policy*. The average response of all GVFD respondents was 5.58 with officer’s responses only slightly higher than the average firefighter response. The average response of respondents from other departments was 6.47 with firefighter responses slightly higher at 6.69. The comment offered from a GVFD member was: “A good part of the policy is in memo form with some of them no longer available.” The comment offered by a respondent from another department was: “Once again, it is not always followed through.”

The fifth question on the survey stated, *in my organization we regularly conduct training on the discipline policy*. The average response from all GVFD respondents was 3.55; the average response from respondents from other departments was also very low at 3.66. The one comment that was offered from a GVFD member was: “The handbook has not been reviewed for three years”. Additionally, the following comments were offered from members of other department: “I can recall one training in 15 years where job duties were explained and the discipline policy was reviewed.” “Annual at best.” “That would be a good thing to do, but then you might be held to that standard. People would also keep better record of other employees mishaps or quid pro quos.”

The sixth question on the survey stated, *in my organization there is confusion on how to apply discipline*. GVFD firefighters felt that there was more confusion in applying discipline

than GVFD officers did. The average firefighter response was 6.55 and the average officer response was 5.38. Firefighters from other departments felt that there was considerably more confusion in how to apply discipline than officers did. The firefighter's average response was 6.44 where as the officers average response was 4.44. The comment offered by a GVFD member was: "Tracking to know if a verbal or written has been given was helped greatly with the T account being available to all officers". This comment is referring to a record keeping tool that has recently been implemented in Greentown Fire Department. There were four comments offered by respondents of outside departments: "There is almost never consistency." "Chain of command sometimes avoided." "We have many young officers whom are newly appointed. They still remember being rank and file and are tentative to deliver discipline, especially for matters that in the grey." "It changes for each employee. Very disheartening, that it is not the same for each person."

The seventh question on the survey stated, *in my organization there is confusion about when to apply discipline*. The average response from GVFD members was 5.83 with less than one third of a point difference between the average firefighter response and that of the average officer response. The average response from a firefighter from an outside department was 6.0 which were considerably more critical than the response of the average officer which was 4.47. No comments were offered by GVFD members on this question; there was one comment from a respondent from an outside department: "It is getting better for attendance, but lacking in other places."

The eighth question on the survey stated, *in my opinion, discipline can be used in a positive manner*. Respondents both from GVFD and the other departments surveyed agreed that discipline could be used in a positive manner. The average response from GVFD was 7.65 and

the average from other respondents was 8.68. There were no comments offered from GVFD members, however there was two comments offered from outside respondents: “When done properly.” “You learn better from mistakes.”

The ninth question on the survey stated, *in my organization discipline is used as a tool to help improve employee performance.* The average response from GVFD members was 5.1 with officers disagreeing more by giving an average rating of 4.56. The average response of outside respondents was 5.68. There was a spread of nearly two full points between the average response of an officer at 6.6 than of a firefighter at 4.81. There were no comments offered by GVFD personnel; there were two comments offered by outside respondents:”Never. Employees are ridiculed by officers and peers, reducing employee motivation.” “I think that discipline helps my performance personally, but this may not be the same for everyone.”

The tenth survey question stated, *in my organization people are rarely discipline.* The average response from a GVFD firefighter was 4.55 and average response from a GVFD officer was 6.22. There was an even greater disproportion between the responses of firefighters and officers from outside departments. The average firefighter response was 7.06 and average response from an officer was 5.0. There were several comments made by both GVFD members and respondents from outside departments. The comments from GVFD members included: “Depends on who is receiving the discipline.” “No one truly knows, there are rumors but it is kept secret, for the most part it is between the admin and employee being disciplined.” “Depends on the person.” Responses from outside respondents included: “Threatened and harassed more than actual discipline.” “On one department we don’t have too many issues where people need discipline. On the other, it’s very inconsistent, so sometimes people are disciplined ‘reg’ and then sometimes they are not.” “We have a fairly good group of employees. Most of our issues

are with attendance.” “I think this goes pretty much across the board at every department I work at. Even at my full-time department, people are rarely discipline and if they are it is with little to no consequence. Even though I come from a very strict military background I believe setting the bar high should be the standard in our field. If you can’t handle the responsibility that comes with the position you occupy and you continuously fail to meet the standard, you should be disciplined and eventually terminated. You never really see that and it’s troubling. We should only want, expect, and demand the very best from ever member of the fire service in my opinion.”

The eleventh question stated, *in my organization management uses discipline strictly as punishment*. GVFD firefighters and officers had nearly identical average responses to this question with an average combined response of 5.65. The average response of a firefighter from an outside department was 5.75; the average response from an officer was 3.86. There were no comments offered from any respondents.

The twelfth survey question stated, *in my organization, discipline is administered fairly and equitably*. The average response from GVFD personnel was very low with a total average of 4.13; officers average responses were even lower at 3.56. This low average is contrasted by the average response of 6.73 from officers of outside departments; the average response from firefighters from outside departments was considerably lower at 4.38. There were no comments offered by GVFD members and there were two offered by outside respondents: “Some officers try, but once again there is no consistency.” “On the one department yes, that department gets a ten. The other department it is never fair.”

The thirteenth survey question stated, *in my organization, discipline is administered consistently and without favoritism*. The average response from a GVFD officer was 3.75

whereas the average response from an outside officer was 6.8. The average response of a GVFD firefighter was slightly higher than that of a GVFD officer, and at 4.27 nearly right on par with an outside firefighter. There were no comments offered by GVFD personnel and the following two were offered by outside respondents: “Ha-ha. See above and above and above that.” “See last statement, same answer”.

The fourteenth question stated, *in my organization, discipline procedures negatively affect the morale of the department personnel as a whole*. The average response of all GVFD respondents was 5.52 whereas the average response from outside department respondents was 5.38. There were no comments offered by GVFD members; however, there were several offered by outside respondents: “Yes-due to the manner in which the discipline is carried out. Personnel are verbally harassed and threatened rather than verbally warned or written up.” “On the one department no, discipline is very fair and equal. On the other it’s handed out very inconsistent and inappropriately so there is a huge morale problem there because of how it’s handled.” “Just when the pot stirrers get a hold that a discipline was different from someone else’s.”

The fifteenth question stated, *in my opinion it is important for a fire department to have a well written and administered discipline policy*. The average responses to this question from both GVFD personnel and outside respondents were all 9.0 or higher, showing overwhelming support for a well written and administered discipline policy. One comment was offered from an outside respondent; none were offered from GVFD personnel: “I agree 100%”.

Question 3: What are some ways that the Greentown Fire Department could improve its progressive discipline policy, and the administration of that policy?

To answer this question the results of the first survey were coupled with the finding from the review of past disciplinary practices to identify deficiencies in GVFD's disciplinary system. Once areas of concern had been identified, the literature review is used to identify possible ways to improve the disciplinary policy. Several steps can be used to improve the progressive discipline policy of the Greentown Fire Department. The first is to develop a progressive disciplinary policy that is fair and well-written, meets the department's needs, and sets clear and obtainable rules and disciplinary procedures. The policy should also contain a timeframe for disciplinary actions to remain on a member's record. Members of the department should be used to help develop the policy to increase support it. The policy should be reviewed and updated as needed, and on a set schedule. Once the policy is developed, it must be communicated to the members of the department both in writing, and via trainings on the policy. Trainings should be held whenever policies are updated and at least annually. Supervisors must also be trained on implementation of the policy to ensure that it is applied in a fair and consistent manner. Supervisors must be held accountable if they do not implement the policy in a fair and consistent manner. Finally, a documentation system needs to be developed and maintained in a manner that allows for efficient and accurate record keeping of disciplinary actions.

DISCUSSION

A review of Greentown Fire Department's current discipline policy reveals a policy that has not had an update for several years. It is recommended that a discipline policy be updated as necessary, to keep it relevant to the current state of the department. Cornell (2003) addresses this by saying "as times change, so do the rules of the game. Don't be afraid to change the rules as

they become outdated”. The review also indicated that the policy is very vague as it relates to behavioral expectations. The survey question that states in *my organization there is a thoroughly written discipline policy* received an average overall response of 5.82, with officers, who are task with administering the policy, rating it significantly lower at 4.56. Although not every possible rule violation could be included in any policy, DelCampo (2011) recommends that “the organization must set clear, obtainable and well communicated rules”. The survey question that said *in my opinion it is important for a fire department to have a well written and administered discipline policy* received very high agreement from GVFD members. The average response for this question was 9.1 which was by far the highest response to any question on the survey. Even though it is recommended that a policy set clear rules, it is also noted by IFSTA (2007) that “most SOPs/SOGs should include a general duty clause that simply prohibits actions or behaviors that are considered unprofessional or inappropriate” (p. 307). GVFD’s current discipline policy reflects this recommendation; it contains a well-written disclaimer that states “sections are not intended to be all inclusive, and the fire department reserves the right to impose disciplinary action of its choosing arising from other behavior and situations not listed below, as it deems appropriate”(Standards of Conduct, 2001, p. 1).

No matter how well-written and up to date a policy is, it will not be effective if the officers and members of the department are not familiar with it. The first question on the survey that was distributed asks if there is a written discipline policy in the member’s organization. It is very troubling to find that of the thirty-one GVFD members who responded to the survey, nine answered *no* or *unknown*. It is even more troubling to find that one of the officers, who are responsible for enforcing discipline within the department, responded with a *no* to this question. In addition, the question that says that *I am very familiar with my departments current discipline*

policy only received an average response of 5.82. It is difficult for a member to follow the rules, and even more difficult for an officer to enforce them, if they are not well-familiarized with the discipline policy. Cornell (2003) notes that one of the key complaints when someone is disciplined is that the “employees may not be clear what constitutes a rule infraction” (para.3). As department administrators we need ensure that all policies, including the discipline policy, are well-communicated to members of the department, and that they are trained on the policies. Antonellis (2012) recommends that the department provide copies of its policies to its members, and that the members should sign to acknowledge receipt of the policies. He also recommends that “the department should be conducting training sessions on the policies, to show the employees and supervisors what are acceptable behaviors for the department”(p. 171). The survey question that states in *my organization we regularly conduct training on the discipline policy*, only received an average response of 3.55; this demonstrates that GVFD is currently failing to meet this recommendation.

In addition to training on the specifics of the policies, all supervisors must be trained on how to administer the policies. This training will help to ensure that the policies are administered in a fair and consistent manner. Several authors speak of the importance of ensuring consistent administration of the policies including Cornell (2003) when she says, “dealing with rule infractions on a case-by-case basis can leave the impression, often accurately, that each individual will be dealt with differently”(Clear expectations). It was found that this is of considerable concern as it relates to discipline administration within GVFD because of the feedback from the survey. In fact the two questions that dealt directly with this issue received extremely low ratings. The question that states, *in my organization discipline is administered consistently and without favoritism*, received an overall response of 4.13 with officers rating it

lower than firefighters. In addition, the question that said *in my organization discipline is administered fairly and equitable* received an overall average rating of 4.0 with officers rating it lower than firefighters.

As the results of both surveys are examined, it is noted that, across the board, the members of other local departments that participated in the survey felt that discipline in their departments was handled in a manner which they rated higher than what the members of GVFD rated theirs. With that being said, the outside department's ratings, although higher on average, showed very similar areas of concern to those of GVFD. It is also interesting to see that in nearly every category on the GVFD survey, the officers, who are responsible for its administration, rated the discipline in the department more critically than the firefighters did. This was not true in most cases on the survey of outside departments.

In conclusion, there are several areas of concern which must be addressed in the Greentown Fire Department's disciplinary policy and practice; however, these areas of concern do not appear to be exclusive to the Greentown Fire Department. In addition, it is encouraging to see that from the results of the survey that individuals within the department believe in the positive effects of a strong discipline policy and system. It is the researchers belief, that with the data collected and the information gathered from several literature sources, it is possible to move forward in making positive changes within the discipline policy and system of the Greentown Fire Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation is to update the outdated discipline policy of the GVFD to meet the current needs of the department. The policy should set clear and obtainable rules and

procedures. These rules and procedures should include items such as levels of discipline for specified offenses and the duration of time that these offenses will remain in the individual's personnel record. This update could be accomplished by utilizing a committee made up of members of the department which will help those affected by the rules to understand the reason for them. Additionally, this, and all policies, should be updated as needed, and any unused or unenforced policies should be removed from the policy book.

The next recommendation is to distribute the updated policy to all members of the department. This should be done in writing, and the members should sign an acknowledgement of receipt. This, and all policies, should be kept in a central location where it can be accessed by any member at anytime that they may have a question about a policy. In addition, the department should train its members on the policies at least annually, and when there are updates to policies.

The training should not end with the membership as a whole; it should include additional training for the officers of the department who are task with administering discipline. These officers must know not only the discipline policy; they should have a thorough understanding of all departmental policies. They must also know the appropriate procedure for administering and documenting discipline to ensure that it is done in a fair and consistent manner. The officers must also be held accountable for the appropriate, fair, and consistent administration of discipline.

The final recommendation is to establish a disciplinary documentation system that allows disciplinary actions to be tracked in a consistent and efficient manner. This system should include standardized forms and a filing system that allows for disciplinary records to be kept in a secure, yet easily accessible manner for authorized personnel to access. This system would allow

no question as to a member's previous disciplinary history, or as to which step of the progressive disciplinary system should be implemented next.

Even though the purpose of this research paper was to identify any opportunities for improvement in the discipline policy and system of the Greentown Fire Department, it is also noteworthy to mention that it may be just as important to extend the above recommendations to encompass all policies within the department. After all, the discipline policy may dictate how discipline is administered; however, all of the policies of the department are the foundation from which the discipline system is built.

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APPENDIX A– FIRE PROTECTION CONTRACT

FIRE PROTECTION CONTRACT BETWEEN THE LAKE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE GREENTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

(Ohio Revised Code sections 9.60, 505.44)

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this 8th day of February, 2010, by and between the LAKE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES ("TOWNSHIP"), an Ohio political subdivision, and the GREENTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ("FIRE COMPANY"), a private fire company, pursuant to the authority and provisions of Ohio Revised Code sections 9.60, 505.44 and other applicable provisions of the code.

Whereas, any Ohio governmental entity may contract with any firefighting company to obtain fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS), as appropriate, on either a regular basis or only in times of emergency, upon the approval of the governing boards or administrative heads of the parties to the contract; and

Whereas, TOWNSHIP desires to establish and continue fire protection and emergency medical services for the citizens and general public within the Lake Township Fire District; and

Whereas, FIRE COMPANY agrees to provide fire protection and emergency medical services on a regular and emergency basis to the citizens and general public within the Lake Township Fire District; and

Whereas, the parties hereto, and pursuant to the express authority and subject to the governing provisions of ORC 9.60 *Firefighting Agreements* and ORC 505.44 *Contracts for Ambulance Service*, and in consideration of the following promises, covenants and agreements, hereinafter set forth, specifically agree as follows:

CONSIDERATION:

1. TOWNSHIP during the course of this contract, and any extensions hereof, agrees to pay to FIRE COMPANY for both, fire protection services and emergency medical services, on a regular basis and in times of emergency during the calendar year beginning January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010, and each year thereafter that this Agreement remains effective.

(a) The FIRE COMPANY shall be paid for its services to be provided in the year 2010, and each year thereafter that this Agreement remains effective, in an amount to be determined on or before December 31st of each year and following the legislative approval and execution of this Agreement and in accordance with the procedure hereafter specified. The TOWNSHIP will, for the term of this contract and each year thereafter that this Agreement remains effective, adopt by resolution on or before December 31st of each year, the "Distribution of Funds" and the FIRE COMPANY will acknowledge said Distribution of funds by signing the acceptance form as provided by the TOWNSHIP. Such amount available shall be determined based on the funds generated from the Fire and EMS levies. Said amount shall be paid in five installments, each of which shall be paid on or about the 15th day of February, and on or about

the 15th day of April, July, October and December. The first such installment shall be paid, on or about the 15th day of February, in a sum determined by the TOWNSHIP from any balance in the fire fund(s) of the TOWNSHIP which are carried over from the prior year.

(b). The payment for such fire protection services and emergency medical services, on a regular basis and in times of emergency, is non-inclusive of other invoices that are determined to be necessary by the FIRE COMPANY pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 505.44(B).

(c). The FIRE COMPANY acknowledges that it will be receiving public monies paid to it by the TOWNSHIP which are generated from Fire and/or EMS levies voted on and approved by the registered voters of the Lake Township Fire District in prior elections. The FIRE COMPANY also agrees that since these public monies are being paid to it for the provision of services that certain financial oversight in reference to these public funds may be required as part of this contract, as determined by the TOWNSHIP. In addition, any officer of the FIRE COMPANY who is a signatory on any account of the FIRE COMPANY shall be bonded for honesty and fidelity by an insurance company in good standing in the State of Ohio in a sum of at least One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) and shall remain bonded for the term of this Agreement and each year thereafter that this Agreement remains effective.

2. FIRE COMPANY agrees to provide fire protection services and emergency medical services, on a regular basis and in times of emergency, for the TOWNSHIP, its citizens and the general public utilizing the best available methods and to the extent that FIRE COMPANY is able to do so with its equipment and personnel.

As additional consideration FIRE COMPANY agrees to provide TOWNSHIP monthly written reports and to regularly, meet, discuss and continue a dialogue with TOWNSHIP to determine the best methods, levy and millage necessary to meet the fire protection needs of the citizens and general public of the TOWNSHIP in calendar year 2011 and thereafter.

SERVICE AREAS AND MUTUAL OR AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENTS

The FIRE COMPANY shall provide services and equipment to the entire territory of the Lake Township Fire District. The FIRE COMPANY shall work on a cooperative basis with the TOWNSHIP and all other FIRE COMPANIES with whom the TOWNSHIP contracts with to provide service within the Lake Township Fire District as well as with those entities with whom the FIRE COMPANIES contract pursuant to Automatic or Mutual Aid Contracts as are requested by the TOWNSHIP from time to time. If the FIRE COMPANY has mutual aid agreements or other contracts with other fire companies, or political subdivisions of this state, it shall retain sufficient equipment to provide protection for the citizens, residents and property owners of the Lake Township Fire District. Primary response areas (for initial response) within the Lake Township Fire District, in place at the time of this Agreement, shall remain in effect for the duration of this Agreement, unless determined otherwise by the TOWNSHIP and FIRE COMPANIES.

FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER/ACTIVITIES

The Chief of the FIRE COMPANY or his/her designated representative, shall notify the Fire Prevention Officer at the Township Lake Township Hall, of a fire occurring in the FIRE COMPANY'S primary area of responsibility in Lake Township or where it is initial responder, immediately; and in any case, no later than two (2) days after the occurrence of said fire; and within two (2) days of the fire shall provide the Fire Prevention Officer with all information in his/her/its possession so that the Township Fire Prevention Officer can conduct an investigation into the cause, origin and circumstances of said fire, and all other information required by the State Fire Marshall's Office in accordance with Section 3737.24 of the Ohio Revised Code. The FIRE COMPANY shall provide any additional information it subsequently receives concerning a fire to the Fire Prevention Officer and the Fire Safety Inspector in the performance of their duties. The FIRE COMPANY, through its Chief or authorized designee of the Chief, shall at all times, have sole responsibility for the operation of all its fire apparatus, vehicles, equipment and personnel during the term of this agreement.

The FIRE COMPANY through its Chief or authorized designee shall be in charge at the scenes of fires or other incidents involving emergency medical and rescue services until authority is relinquished. The Fire Chief or authorized designee shall have the sole responsibility for the operations of all firefighting apparatus, equipment, personnel and mutual aid at such scenes. For such purposes, the Fire Prevention Officer of Lake Township, by executing this contract hereby delegates to the Chief of the FIRE COMPANY and any authorized designee, any authority at the scenes of fires or other incidents involving emergency medical and rescue services which the Fire Prevention Officer has or might have under the provisions of Ohio Law.

DISSOLUTION OF FIRE COMPANY:

In the event that the FIRE COMPANY should ever dissolve pursuant to Ohio Law or otherwise, the FIRE COMPANY agrees that this Agreement shall then terminate and that the assets of the FIRE COMPANY of any kind or description, shall be distributed by resolution to an exempt organization under Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and/or local government within the confines of Lake Township, in proportion to the payments made by said local government over the years to the FIRE COMPANY.

LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE:

This Agreement shall be attached to and incorporated within the Township Resolution Number 10-073 and the TOWNSHIP represents that all actions of the TOWNSHIP, including the actions of the Lake Township Board of Trustees and its administrative officers concerning and relating to the passage of the enabling resolution were adopted in open meetings of Township Board of Trustees in compliance with Ohio Revised Code section 121.22 and that the Township has the full authority under the referenced laws and regulations and under all applicable statutory provisions to enter into this Agreement. The Lake Township Board of Trustees and its administrative officers recognize that this fire protection agreement is specifically authorized and governed by ORC 9.60, ORC 505.44, and other applicable provisions of the law.

AUTHORITY:

Each party hereto represents and affirms to the other that it has full legal authority to enter into this Agreement; that this Agreement has been approved by the respective parties Board of Trustees and/or legislative authority; and that the officers or representatives signing this Agreement are duly authorized to sign on behalf of the respective parties; and, that entering this Agreement will not conflict with or violate the terms of any other agreements or obligations to wage each respective party is obligated or bound.

INSURANCE AND INDEMNIFICATION:

The FIRE COMPANY agrees to purchase such liability insurance or insurances as may be necessary to protect the FIRE COMPANY and the TOWNSHIP from and against all claims, demands, suits and liabilities which may arise under this Agreement or otherwise as a result of the FIRE COMPANY'S actions or related to any alleged omissions in the provision of FIRE COMPANY services hereunder. The FIRE COMPANY agrees to hold the TRUSTEES harmless and to indemnify the TRUSTEES as to any and all claims and liabilities which may arise under this agreement as a result of the FIRE COMPANY'S actions.

NOTICE:

Notice to be given under this Agreement shall be in writing and delivered in person or transmitted by certified mail, return receipt requested, postage prepaid as follows:

Lake Township Board of Trustees
C/O Ben Sommers, Fiscal Officer
12360 Market Avenue North
Hartville, OH 44632

And to:

Greentown Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.
C/O President / Treasurer
10100 Cleveland Ave NW
Uniontown, Ohio 44685

or to such other addresses and to such individuals as may be specified by either party by prior written notice.

SUCCESSORS and ASSIGNS:

This Agreement shall be binding upon each party hereto, and their successors and assigns. Neither party may assign any rights or obligations under this Agreement without first obtaining the prior written consent of the other party.

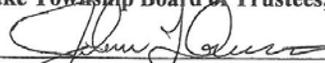
TERM OF AGREEMENT

This Agreement shall be effective as of the 8th day of February, 2010 and shall continue in full force and effect until December 31, 2010, and for yearly periods thereafter, unless either party shall notify the other party in writing not less than ninety (90) days before any such termination date of such party's desire to renegotiate the Agreement. After such notice is given, the parties shall meet at a mutually satisfactory time and place for the purpose of discussing whether a new Agreement should be negotiated or the parties should terminate their contractual arrangements.

ARBITRATION:

In the event that any disagreement arises out of or relating to this Agreement, the parties shall first use their best, good-faith, efforts to reach a negotiated resolution. Upon thirty (30) days prior written notice by either party to the other, the party giving notice may submit the dispute for resolution under the rules of the American Arbitration Association, for commercial disputes to a single arbitrator, unless otherwise agreed by the parties. Any arbitration hearing shall take place within Stark County, Ohio. The arbitration decision and award, if applicable, shall be final and binding upon the parties. Notwithstanding the foregoing, either party may have access to courts of competent jurisdiction for injunctive relief in the event of an emergency or if a party shall be irreparably harmed by the arbitration timelines.

Lake Township Board of Trustees, Stark County, Ohio:


Trustee


Trustee


Trustee

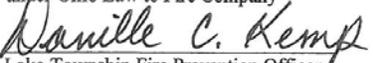
GREENTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

By:

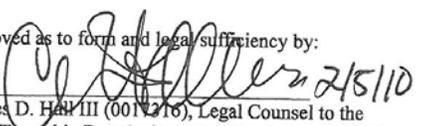
President


Treasurer

Approval for Delegation of Responsibility
under Ohio Law to Fire Company


Lake Township Fire Prevention Officer

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency by:

 7/5/10
Charles D. Hill III (0011276), Legal Counsel to the
Lake, Township Board of Trustees, Stark County, Ohio

APPENDIX B – Chapter 14 Disciplinary Action

CHAPTER 14

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Chapter 14 Page 1 of 2

- 14.1 It is the responsibility of each Officer of the Fire Department, while on duty, to maintain discipline and to assure adherence to the guideline, policies, practices and procedures of the Fire Department. Failure to uphold these responsibilities constitutes dereliction of the Officer's duty.
- 14.2 All Officers of the Fire Department have the power, on witnessing an act unbecoming an employee of the Fire Department to take necessary action. Any disciplinary action by an Officer beyond verbal counseling shall be documented on a Notice of Disciplinary Action, Separation or Layoff. The action will not become final until it is approved, up the chain of command, by the Fire Chief after appropriate inquiry of the facts and circumstances. The Fire Chief will attempt to decide all disciplinary matters within fourteen (14) days. Appeals may be made to the Board of Trustees and Sections 14.4 of this Chapter for any disciplinary action except as limited within the specific provisions of these Guidelines.
- 14.3 The Fire Department reserves the right to impose discipline based upon the seriousness of the conduct at issue, and may, in its sole discretion, determine whether progressive discipline is or is not appropriate. The ranges of disciplinary actions, which may be imposed, include verbal counseling, a verbal or written reprimand, suspension or suspension with recommendation for dismissal. The following procedures apply with respect to each of these actions.
- A. Verbal counseling – Anytime an infraction or violation comes to an Officer's attention, it is his or her duty to discuss this matter with the Employee(s) and or volunteer(s) involved.
 - B. Verbal reprimand – The Officer shall file a brief written summary of the offense for which the employee was reprimanded. The employee will be requested to sign the written summary, which will then be forwarded through the Chain of Command to the Fire Chief. The employee or volunteer is entitled to a copy of the summary.
 - C. Written reprimand – The investigating Officer shall prepare a complete written account of the facts surrounding the incident, including dates, times, and names of any witnesses. The employee will be requested to sign the written account. The reprimand shall be forwarded through the Chain of Command to the Fire Chief. If the Fire Chief approves, the document will be placed in the employee's personnel file, along with any other approved disciplinary action.
 - D. Suspension up to 30 calendar days – The suspension will take effect immediately, but will not be final until and unless approved by the Board of Trustees of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief, or in the absence of the Fire Chief, an AC may approve the suspension of an Employee or Volunteer of the Fire Department for up to three (3) calendar days. The employee is entitled to a copy of the Suspension Notice and will be required to sign such papers.

E. Suspension with recommendation for dismissal – With this action the Employee or volunteer is suspended pending a hearing by the Fire Chief. A written report must be filed outlining the offense with a copy to the employee. The Fire Chief will decide whether to dismiss the employee and advise the employee of his/her right to appeal the final determination to the Board of Trustees of the Fire Department.

- 14.4 Within 72 hours of an employee receiving notice of the Fire Chief's final determination with respect to the disciplinary action, the employee or any party adversely affected by the final determination may request in writing to the Fire Chief the desire to appeal the determination to the Board of Trustees of the Fire Department .

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APPENDIX C – STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

CHAPTER 18

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Chapter 18 Page 1 of 3

- 18.1 All employees shall read and follow the Standard Operating Procedures or Guidelines and Employee Personnel Handbook governing the Fire Department.
- 18.2 Listed below are samples of the type of conduct, which the Fire Department views as requiring immediate disciplinary action. The Fire Department has a substantial interest in ensuring that its employees volunteers, exemplify the Fire Department as committed to the safety of the general public. Conduct, which demonstrates a gross disregard for the safety of the public, and/or local, state or federal law, whether, it occurs while on or off-duty is unacceptable. The list below and in proceeding Sections are not intended to be all inclusive, and the Fire Department reserves the right to impose disciplinary action of its choosing arising from other behavior and situations not listed below as it deems appropriate.
- A. For: 1) using, selling or possessing; 2) engaging in any act which could reasonably be deemed as causing, supporting or encouraging others in the use, sale, or possession; or 3) failing to report the use, sale or possession of any intoxicating liquor or illegal drug while on duty, or while wearing issued Fire Department uniform or insignia. These standards are set forth in greater detail in Chapter 21 which outlines the Fire Department's policy on a Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace.
 - B. For willful disobedience of a reasonable legitimate order issued to him/her by a superior Officer of the Fire Department.
 - C. For the conviction of any felony under the laws of the United States or the State of Ohio or a conviction of any act, which undermines the safety consciousness of the employee as a member of the Fire Department, regardless of whether the act in question occurred on or off duty.
 - D. For over aggressive use of indecent, profane, or harsh language while on duty or in uniform.
 - E. For insubordination toward a senior Officer or disrespect toward any employee of the Fire Department or Lake Township.
 - F. For neglect of duty.
 - G. For absence without leave.
 - H. For conduct detrimental to the good order of the Fire Department.
 - I. For failure to report change of residence or telephone to the Fire Chief or President, Board of Trustees within 30 days after moving or new number.
 - J. For the removal or taking of any property belonging to the Fire Department without the approval by the appropriate officer and without completing the equipment loan form. (Note: some restrictions apply with respect to the type of equipment, which is available for loan to personnel). [see posted list]
 - K. For the unauthorized removal of any property from public or private property, i.e., from a fire or emergency scene, that is not associated with or necessary for the proper investigation of a fire or emergency situation.

- L. For providing, distributing, submitting, using, or failing to report knowledge of any falsified documents or documents containing misrepresentations, including but not limited to reports, personnel information, and documents prepared for other outside agencies.
- M.
- 18.3 No employee-volunteer shall reveal Fire Department information except as required by law or competent authority. Specifically, information contained in the Fire Department records, other information ordinarily accessible only to employees or volunteers is considered confidential in nature. Indiscriminate and unauthorized disclosure of this and similar information reflects gross misconduct.
- 18.4 No employee or volunteer of the Fire Department shall accept personal rewards or gifts, presents of any kind for services rendered without the permission of the Fire Chief or Officer in charge.
- 18.5 No employee or volunteer shall, as a representative of the Fire Department, invite, solicit or request contributions, subscriptions or donations for any cause without the expressed permission of the Fire Chief.
- 18.6 No employee or volunteer shall use his/her uniform or association with the Fire Department for direct personal gain.
- 18.7 No employee or volunteer shall grant, approve or countenance the use of his/her affiliation with the Fire Department by any person, firm, or corporation for the purpose of influencing the sale of any goods, merchandise, commodities, real estate, stocks or bonds.
- 18.8 No employee or volunteer shall lend his/her name to or use his/her photograph in his/her official capacity in any written or printed article or advertisement, without first obtaining the approval of the Fire Chief.
- 18.9 No employee or volunteer shall be a party to any immoral or indecent conduct while on or off duty.
- 18.10 No employee or volunteer shall use official letterheads, envelopes, or stationary except for the transaction of official business of the Fire Department.
- 18.11 No employee or volunteer shall use the official Fire Department name, logo, or emblem without the express approval of the Fire Chief.
- 18.12 No employee or volunteer in his/her capacity as a member of the Fire Department shall recommend any particular commercial or fire service product.
- 18.13 No employee or volunteer shall place any decorations or advertisements on Fire Department property without the permission of the Fire Chief or Bd. President

- 18.14 No employee or volunteer, under any circumstances, shall engage in altercations while on duty.
- 18.15 No employee or volunteer shall display cowardice or shirk responsibility while on duty.
- 18.16 No employee or volunteer shall smoke, while riding or driving Fire Department vehicles, responding to any fire or other emergency.
- 18.17 No employee or volunteer shall smoke, while riding, driving or operating Engines, Ladders, or EMS Units.
- 18.18 No employee or volunteer shall smoke while in buildings or fire prevention inspections or other Fire Department duties.
- 18.19 No employee or volunteer shall smoke in Fire Department building(s) unless in the designated areas.
- 18.20 No employee or volunteer of the Fire Department shall leave quarters, fires, or any assigned duty without the permission of the Officer in Charge, or the Fire Chief.

APPENDIX D- SURVEY OF OUTSIDE DEPARTMENTS

Discipline administration in the fire service

1. There is a written discipline policy in my organization.

- Yes
- Unknown
- No

Comments:

2. In my organization there is a thoroughly written discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- N/A or Unknown

Comments:

3. In my organization, performance standards and acceptable behaviors are clearly communicated.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Comments:

4. I am very familiar with my department's current discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Comments:

5. In my organization, we regularly conduct training on the discipline policy.
1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

6. In my organization there is confusion about how to apply discipline.
1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

7. In my organization there is confusion about when to apply discipline.
1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

8. In my opinion, discipline can be used in a positive manner.
1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

9. In my organization, discipline is used as a tool to help improve employee performance.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

10. In my organization, people are rarely disciplined.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

11. In my organization management uses discipline strictly as punishment.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

12. In my organization, discipline is administered fairly and equitably.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

13. In my organization, discipline is administered consistently and without favoritism.
1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

14. In my organization, discipline procedures negatively affect the morale of the department personnel as a whole.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

15. In my opinion it is important for a fire department to have a well written and administered discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

16. What is your current rank?

- Chief
- Assistant Chief
- Division Chief
- Battalion Chief
- other Chief grade officer
- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Sergeant
- Engineer
- Firefighter
- other

Other (please specify)

17. What type of organization is your department? (check all that apply)

- Volunteer
- Part-time
- Career

18. How many years have you been in the fire service?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- 30+ years

19. Would you like to have the results of this survey emailed to you? If so, please enter your email address below.

- yes
- No

email

APPENDIX E- SURVEY OF GREENTOWN PERSONNEL

Discipline administration in the Greentown Fire Department

1. There is a written discipline policy in my organization.

- Yes
- Unknown
- No

Comments:

2. In my organization there is a thoroughly written discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- N/A or Unknown

Comments:

3. In my organization, performance standards and acceptable behaviors are clearly communicated.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Comments:

4. I am very familiar with my department's current discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Comments:

5. In my organization, we regularly conduct training on the discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

6. In my organization there is confusion about how to apply discipline.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

7. In my organization there is confusion about when to apply discipline.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

8. In my opinion, discipline can be used in a positive manner.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

9. In my organization, discipline is used as a tool to help improve employee performance.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

10. In my organization, people are rarely disciplined.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

11. In my organization management uses discipline strictly as punishment.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

12. In my organization, discipline is administered fairly and equitably.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

13. In my organization, discipline is administered consistently and without favoritism.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

14. In my organization, discipline procedures negatively affect the morale of the department personnel as a whole.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

15. In my opinion it is important for a fire department to have a well written and administered discipline policy.

1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

16. What is your current rank?

Firefighter

Officer

Other (please specify)

17. How many years have you been in the fire service?

0-3 years

4-5 years

6-10 years

11-20 years

21 or more years

Done

APPENDIX F– REQUEST TO COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE

March 1, 2013

Dear Fire Department Member,

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I am currently enrolled in the Ohio Fire Executive Program (OFE), which is a two and a half year program that focuses on executive fire department leadership, and leading change in the fire service. As part of the program, I am required to complete an applied research project that will identify, and recommend solutions for a problem within my department. The results of the study will be available as a reference to other fire departments that may struggle with a similar problem.

After much thought and careful consideration, I have chosen the topic of; the possible effects of a comprehensive progressive discipline policy. I have chosen this topic because I believe that there are deficiencies in our current system which could be detrimental to both our members and the department as a whole.

As part of the study I am using a survey to collect data from both our department members and members of other local fire departments for comparison.

I ask that you please take approximately five to ten minutes of your time by March 21st to complete the survey that you will find using the attached link. If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please use the comments section on the survey or contact me directly.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I understand and respect the need for anonymity. I give you my word that any and all information will be kept strictly confidential.

Thank you for your assistance.

Respectfully,

Shawn M. Robinson

Assistant Chief

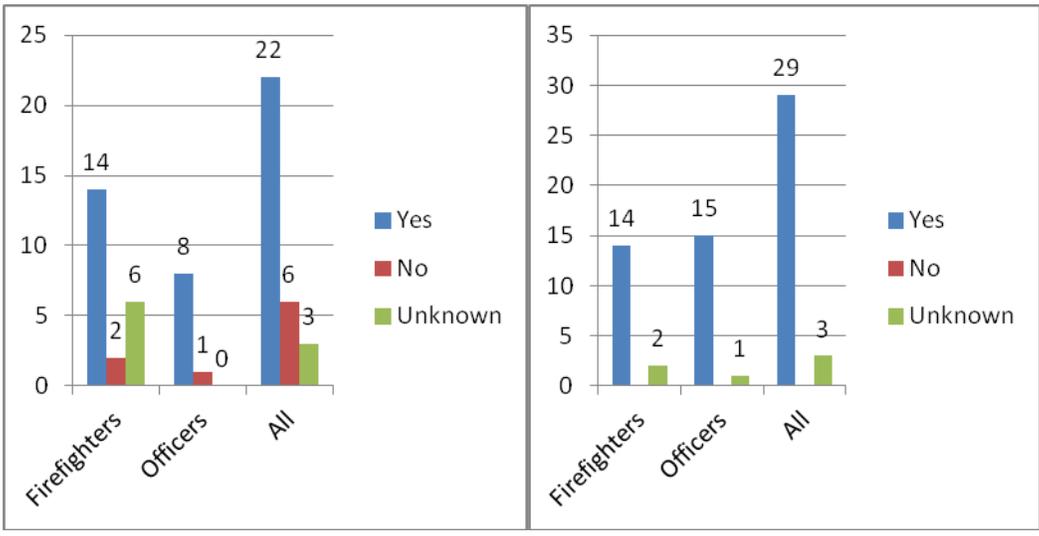
Greentown Fire Department

330-268-4923

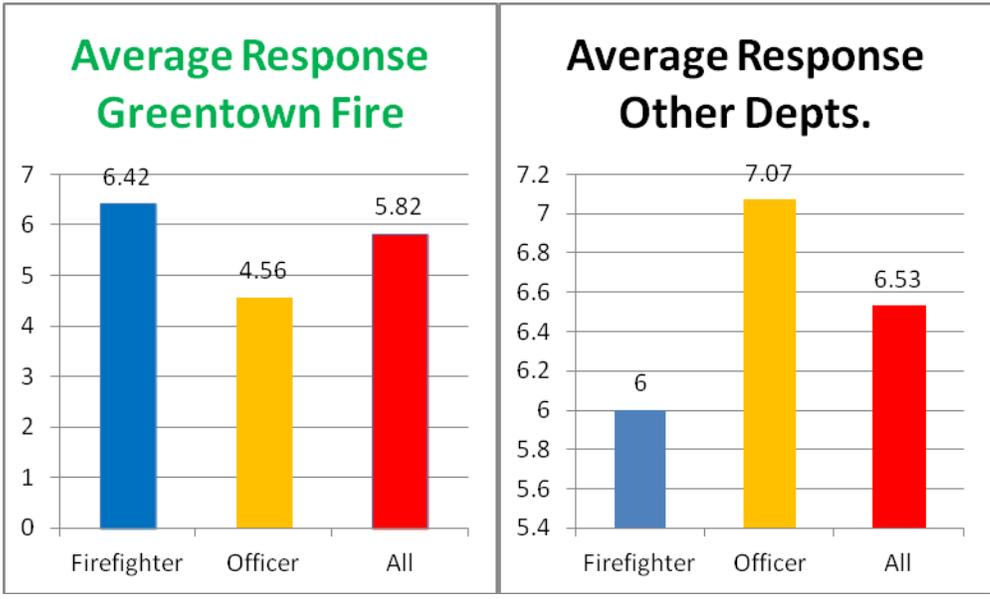
APPENDIX G– RESULTS OF SURVEYS

1. There is a written discipline policy in my organization.

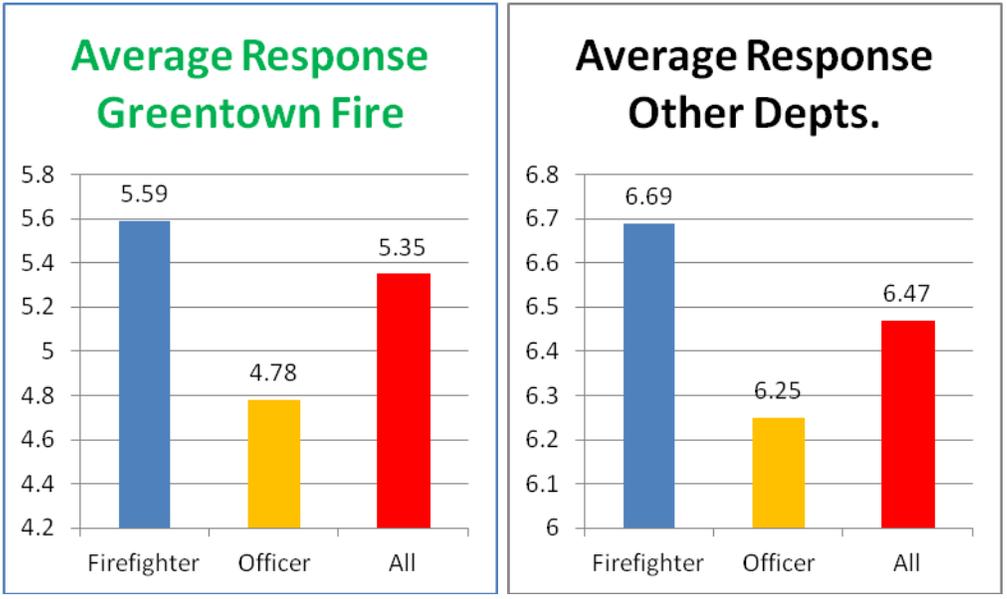
Greentown Responses Other Dept. Responses



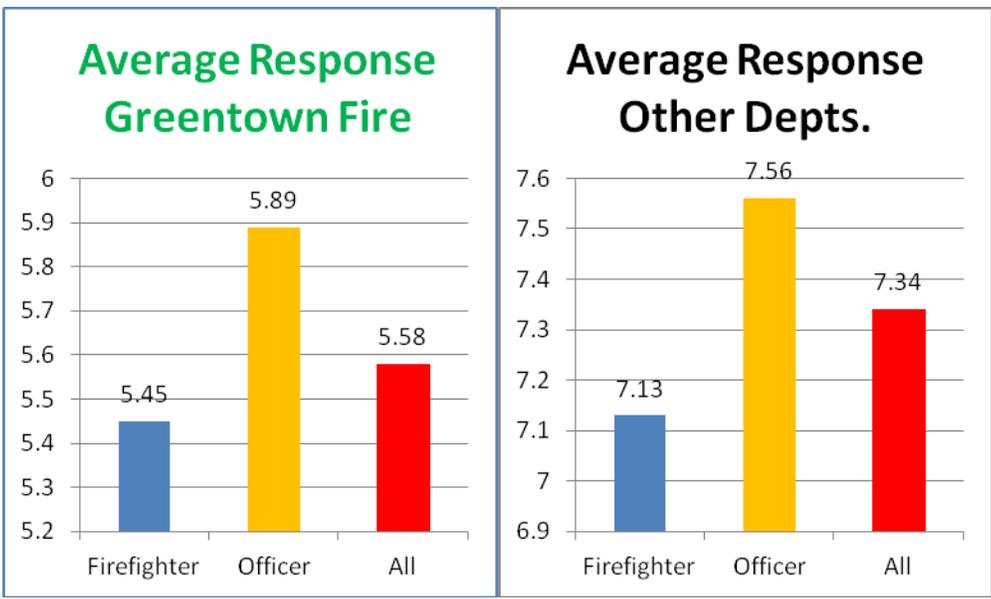
2. In my organization there is a thoroughly written discipline policy. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



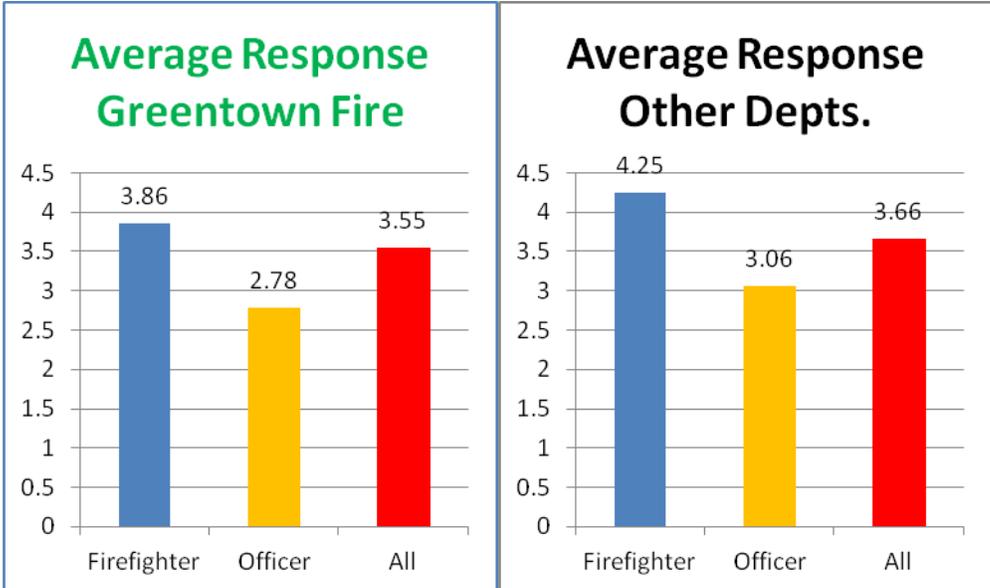
3. In my organization, performance standards and acceptable behaviors are clearly communicated. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



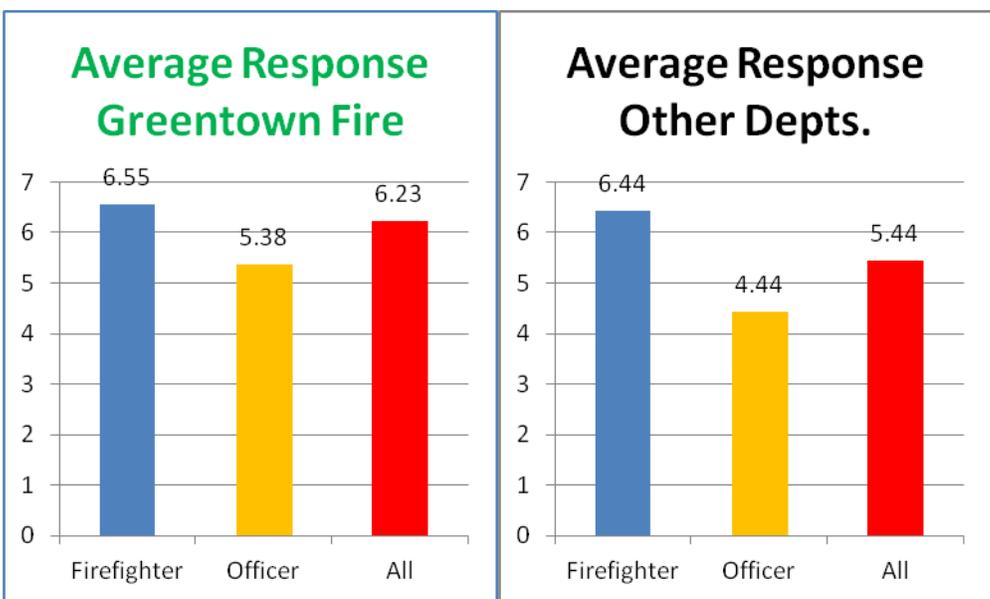
4. I am very familiar with my departments current discipline policy. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



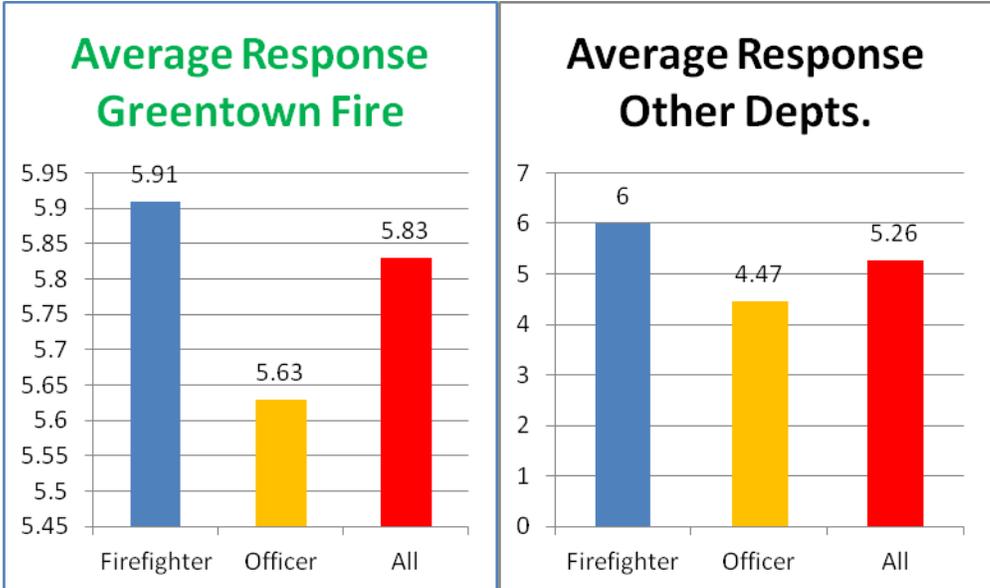
5. In my organization, we regularly conduct training on the discipline policy. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



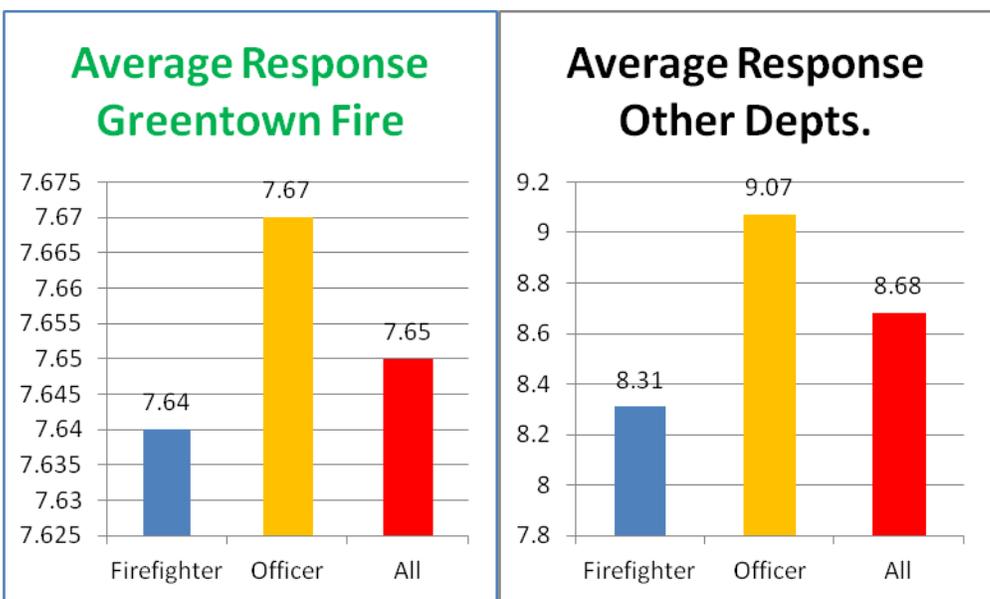
6. In my organization there is confusion about how to apply discipline. 1=Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



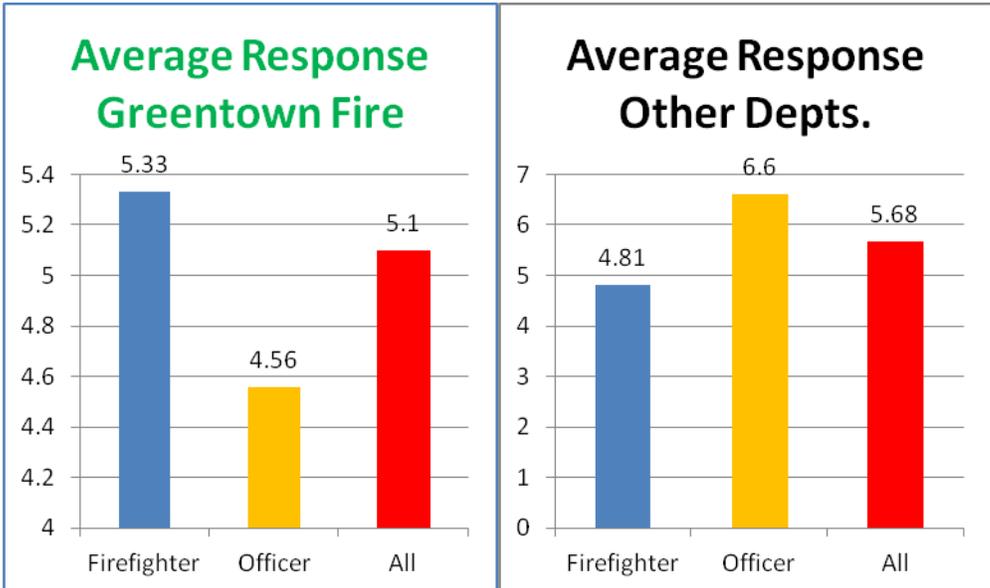
7. In my organization there is confusion about when to apply discipline. 1=Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



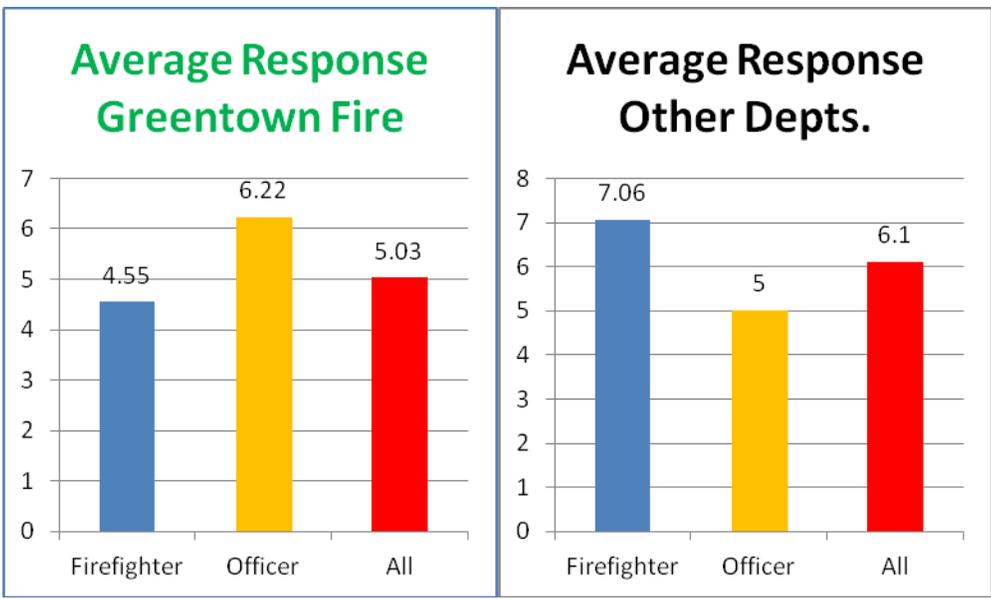
8. In my opinion, discipline can be used in a positive manner. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



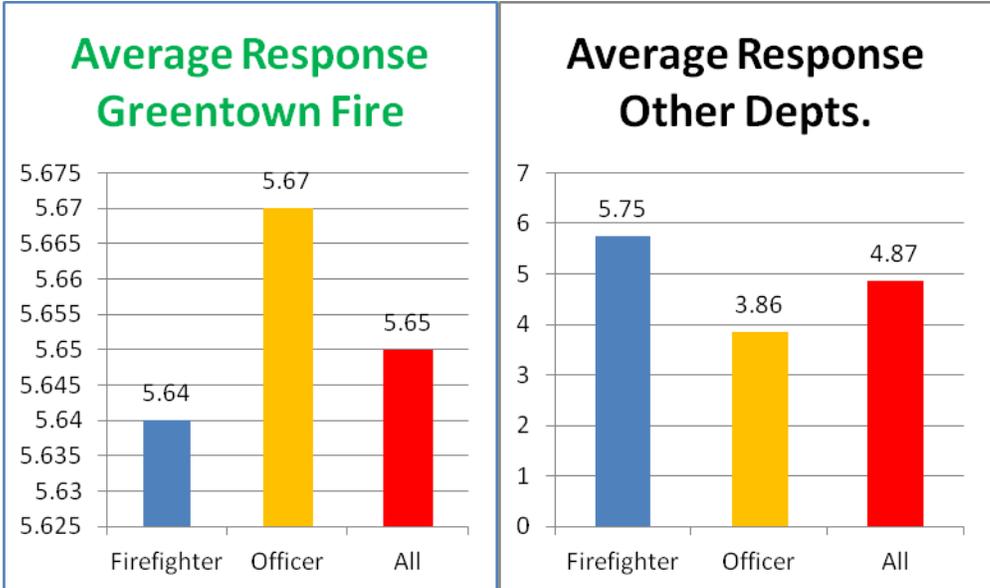
9. In my organization, discipline is used a tool to help improve employee performance. 1=Strongly Disagree 10=Strongly Agree



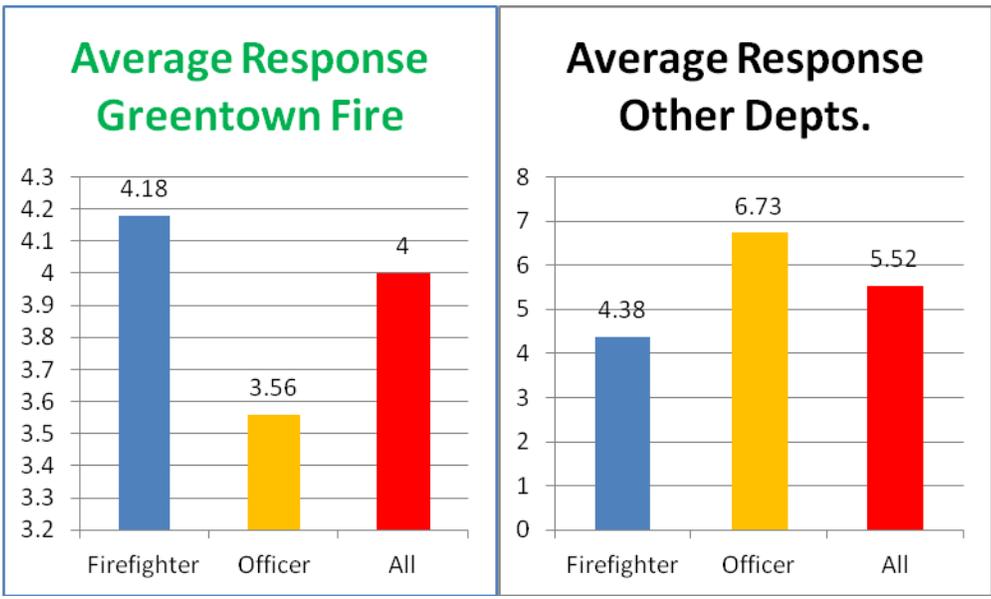
10. In my organization, people are rarely disciplined. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



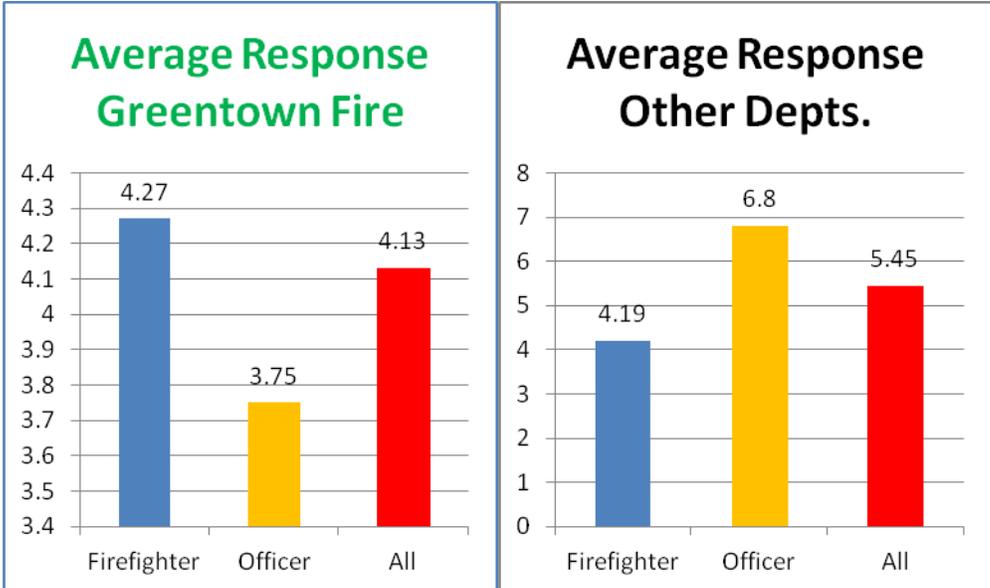
11. In my organization management uses discipline strictly as punishment. 1= Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



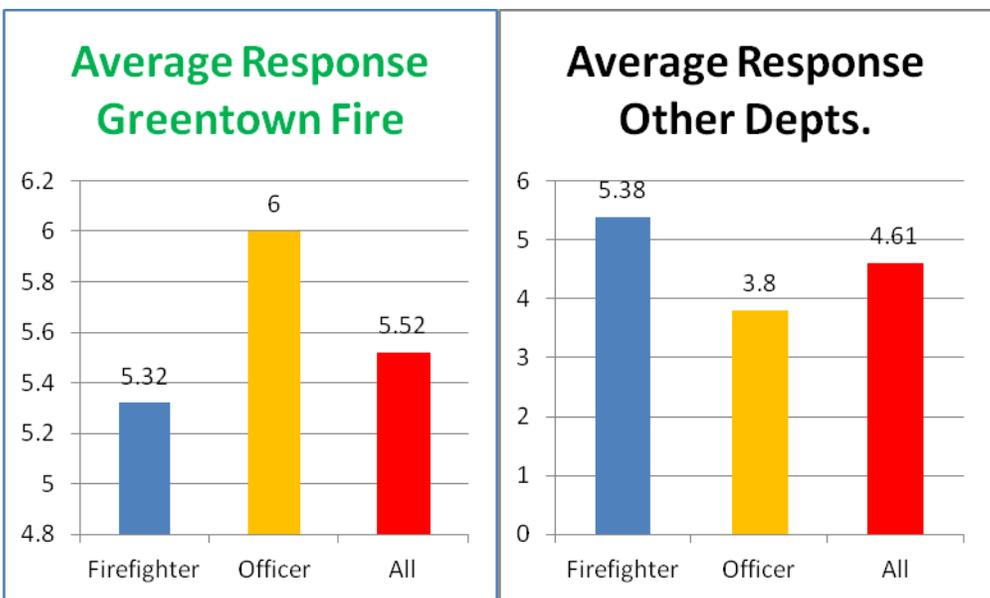
12. In my organization, discipline is administered fairly and equitably. 1=Strongly Disagree 10=Strongly Agree



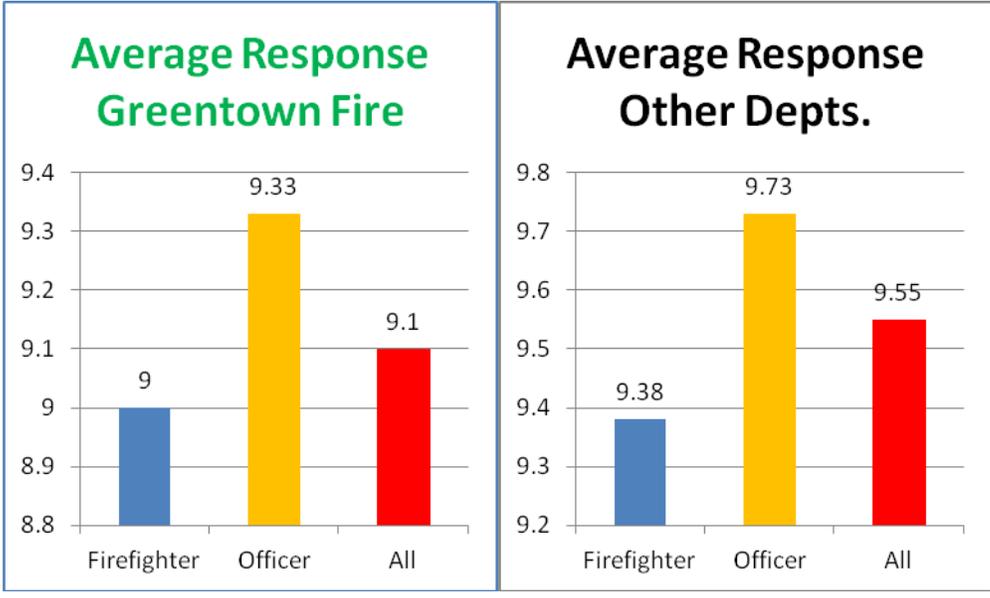
13. In my organization, discipline is administered consistently and without favoritism. 1=Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



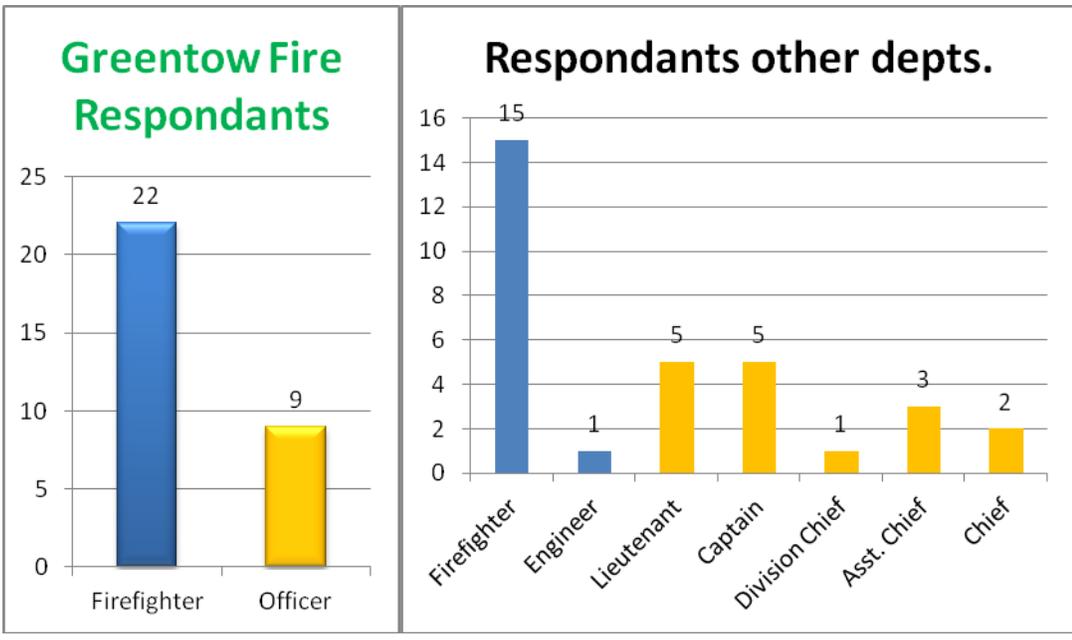
14. In my organization, discipline procedures negatively affect the morale of the department personnel as a whole. 1=Strongly Disagree 10= Strongly Agree



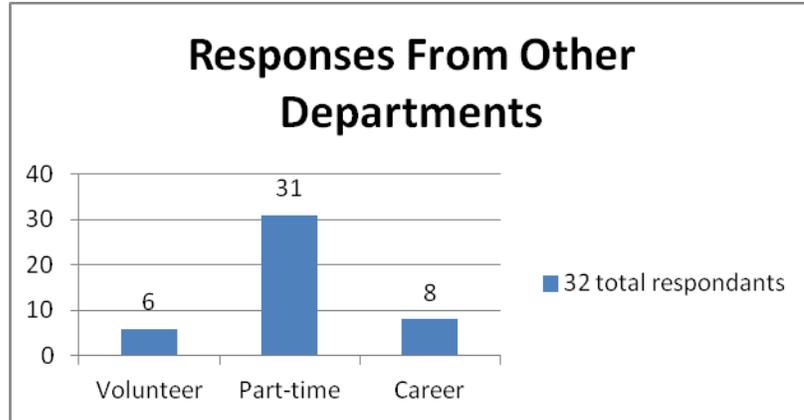
15. In my opinion it is important for a fire department to have a well written and administered discipline policy. 1=Strongly Disagree 10=Strongly Agree



16. What is your current rank?

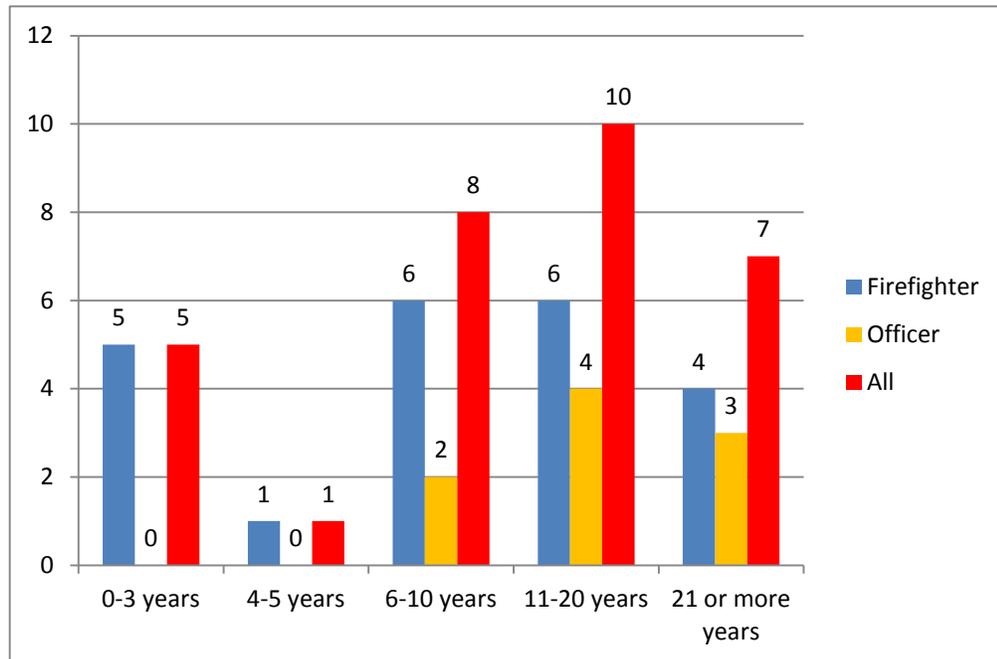


17. What type of Organization is your department? (check all that apply)



18. (Greentown Survey) How many years have you been in the fire service?

Greentown Fire Responses



18.(survey of other departments) How many years have you been in the fire service?

Responses from Other Departments

