

**SOUTH VAN ZANDT
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
RULES & REGULATIONS**

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HEATH MORRIS.....CHIEF OF THE DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

These Rules and Regulations and Departmental Standard Operating Procedures cannot and are not intended to cover all possible situations, but should furnish guidance for members in the exercise of their judgment where specific rules are not established. The commitment and dedication of the members and the leadership of the officers will ultimately determine our success in delivering our services to the citizens.

Nothing contained in these rules, regulations and procedures will be construed to limit the power and authority granted the Chief of the Fire Department in the extinguishment of any fire, in taking the necessary precautions to prevent the ignition or spread thereof, or maintaining the discipline required to accomplish the Department's mission.

Guiding Principles

- 1.1 The honesty and integrity of all members of the Department are of vital importance. The citizens look to the Fire Department to maintain high ethical standards as they entrust us with the care of both their lives and their property. Honesty, veracity, truthfulness, and integrity are prerequisites to maintaining public confidence.
- 2.1 Firefighting is one of the most dangerous activities/professions in the United States. Any uncontrolled fire has the potential to render complete destruction to the building involved and to those buildings exposed to the fire, in addition to threatening the lives of any occupants. Officers and members are authorized and directed to take appropriate actions, through an aggressive interior fire attack when possible, to provide for safety of the occupants and confine and extinguish the fire. However, officers will weigh the risk of the type of fire attack against the possibility of unnecessarily endangering members' lives and make decisions accordingly
- 3.1 While the department's membership is made up of volunteers, by accepting membership in the department a member agrees to be a part of a paramilitary organization. Whereby, officers (including members serving as acting officers) are authorized to order and expected to lead subordinates into dangerous, life-threatening situations. All members are expected to obey without delay any lawful order given by a superior officer. The day-to-day practice of discipline is required, as a life-threatening emergency scene is not the place for discipline to begin.
- 4.1 All members are expected to have a thorough knowledge of the policies, rules, regulations, and procedures of the Department. Members are expected to have a thorough knowledge of operation of all tools and equipment they may be reasonably expected to operate with appropriate skill under normal and adverse conditions.

- 5.1 In enforcing the Department's rules and regulations, officers will take a firm; visibly stand of positive support for the Department. Officers will display positive leadership and openly communicate with subordinates when necessary in order to ensure that rules are followed. It is very important that officers set an example in following this rule because of their prominent and critical position of leadership and authority. Officers are encouraged to seek subordinates' opinions at appropriate times, but officers are ultimately responsible for their decisions and therefore for the success of the Department's mission.
- 6.1 We assist the public whenever possible, and seek opportunities to expand our non-emergency community involvement, to the extent that it does not impair the ability of the Department to provide emergency response.
- 7.1 All citizens are to be treated with the appropriate respect and courtesy that they are due from the members of the Department. We should always strive to treat our citizens with the same compassion, dignity and professionalism with which we would want members of our family to be treated.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1 The Code of Conduct of the Fire Department is promulgated by the Chief of the Fire Department by the authority of The Board of Directors of the South Van Zandt Volunteer Fire Department (a non-profit organization.)
 - 2.1-1 The Code of Conduct is designed to promote efficiency, discipline, good public relations, and preserve the integrity of the Department and the public's confidence in that integrity. The Code of Conduct establishes the rules that govern the conduct of all members of the Department-both while serving the department and away from the department.
 - 2.1-2 The conduct of all members of the Department is governed by the provisions of the Code of Conduct, Rules, Regulations and Procedures of the Department; Bylaws and amendments thereto of the Charter for the South Van Zandt Volunteer Fire Department (a nonprofit organization), Motions approved and current by the Board of Directors of The South Van Zandt Volunteer Fire Department (a nonprofit organization.), not in conflict with Laws of Van Zandt County, State of Texas, and the Government of the United States of America.
 - 2.1-3 Violations of the Code of Conduct; Rule, Regulations and Procedures of the Department; Departmental Charter and Motions approved and current of the Board of Directors; county; state; and federal laws will be considered an offense and can subject the offender to formal disciplinary action which may take the form of a suspension, reduction in rank, or dismissal from the department.

General Conduct

- 2.2 All members will:
 - 2.2-1 Be familiar with and obedient at all times to the Code of Conduct, Departmental rules, regulations and procedures; and all other policies, directives, and orders of the Department.

- 2.2-2 Not violate any provisions of the Code of Conduct; Department rules, regulations and procedures; Departmental Charter Bylaws and amendments thereto; County laws, state and/or federal laws. In the event of improper action or breach of discipline, it will be presumed that the member was familiar with the law, rule, regulation, policy, procedure, directive, or law in question.
- 2.2-3 Be responsible for fulfilling the public's trust by not participating in any conduct while in the service of the department or away from the department which, on becoming public knowledge, could impair the public's confidence or trust in the operation of the Department or the integrity of the members of the Department.
- 2.2-4 Not procure membership in the Department by means of willful misrepresentation or omission of any fact concerning their personal history, qualification, or physical condition.
- 2.2-5 Not engage in any conduct which would constitute conduct unbecoming a member of the Department. Conduct unbecoming a member of the Department includes any unethical or otherwise reprehensible act which law-abiding, self-respecting citizens would find repugnant and which would seriously damage the integrity of the individual and the Department would result in lessened confidence of the public in the Department and/or its members.
- 2.2-6 Not use indecent, profane, abusive, racist, sexist, or provocative language or gestures nor make derogatory remarks or participate in any demeaning actions that refer to one's race, color, religion, sex, ethnic background, or national origin.
- 2.2-7 Not display signs, posters, bumper stickers, or other markings that are obscene or sexually, racially, or ethnically offensive on vehicles that are parked on Department property.
- 2.2-8 In the event of their arrest for a criminal offense, notify, within 24 hours, the Chief of the Department. In his absence, notify the Assistant Chief of the Department. A member who is taken into custody by a law enforcement officer and is charged with an offense as defined by the Texas Penal Code, Texas Health and Safety Code, Family Code, Texas Motor Vehicle Laws, or

violation of any other state statute for which there is a criminal penalty or for violation of a federal statute is considered to have been arrested.

- 2.2-9 Adhere to the Departmental chain of command in the transaction of Department business unless otherwise directed or as specified by applicable rules.
- 2.2-10 Not seek the influence or intervention of anyone outside the Department for purposes of personal advancement or advantage within the Department.
- 2.2-11 Not be party to any malicious gossip, report, or activity which would tend to disrupt Department morale or bring discredit to the Department or any member thereof.
- 2.2-12 Not participate in or conduct abrasive personal attacks on officers or other members which could undermine the harmony necessary for effective Department operations.
- 2.2-13 Not publicly criticize or ridicule the Department, its policies, rules and regulations and procedures, or other members by talking, writing, or expressing in a manner which is defamatory, obscene, unlawful or knowingly untruthful and as a result, impairs the operation of the Department by interfering with the ability of officers to maintain discipline.
- 2.2-14 Not accept directly or indirectly any gift, gratuity, reward, loan, fee discount, rebate, or special consideration arising from or offered because of Fire Department membership or any activity connected with such membership that might reasonably tend to influence the member in the discharge of official duties. This restriction does not apply to special pricing policies, discounts, etc., to the membership as a whole.
- 2.2-15 Not endorse or recommend any particular service, product or brand name while engaged in their official capacity or in any case which might involve the Department.
- 2.2-16 Possess a valid driver's license of the type required for their assigned duties.

- 2.2-17 Make truthful and accurate records or reports and will not make misleading entries or statement with the intent to deceive. Members will not willfully mutilate or discard any useful Department record, book, or document.
- 2.2-18 Keep themselves in proper physical condition necessary to perform the duties of there position and will Hold Harmless the Department due to injury/illness caused by a preexisting fitness or medical issue not disclosed.
- 2.2-19 Notify the Chief of the Department before signing any release from liability or initiating a resolution to civil action for damages involving a third party that would act to bind the South Van Zandt Volunteer Fire Department in cases involving the Department business. This policy is not intended to limit or impair the right of a member to utilize any personal legal remedies available to them by law.
- 2.2-20 Maintain a working telephone number either at their place of residence or cell phone and keep that number on file with the Department.
- 2.2-21 Maintain an accurate residential address on file with the Department.
- 2.2-22 Report any loss of uniforms, personal protective equipment, or other departmental equipment to the Chief of the Department in writing. Include the loss and circumstance surrounding the loss in the memo.
- 2.2-23 Neither lend, sell, give away, nor appropriate to their own use any Departmental equipment, supplies, and/or other Department property without the approval of the Chief of the Department or his designee.
- 2.2-24 Not respond to provide services for the Department within 8 hours of the consumption of alcohol. This includes any consumption and is not governed by the state laws defining “under the influence”. Any member, who responds to provide service in this condition, will be excused from duty and disciplinary action will follow at a later date and time.
- 2.2-25 Not be intoxicated in public view in such a way as to lessen the public’s confidence in the Department.

- 2.2-26 Refrain from any conduct related to alcohol usage which results in violation of the law or suspension of a driver's license or other driving limitation on a member's state driving record.
- 2.2-27 Not possess, ingest, inhale, or inject any illegal controlled substance at any time. Members may not use any drug or inhalant regulated by the Texas Health and Safety Code in an unauthorized manner.
- 2.2-28 Not respond for service under the influence of a prescribed medication that will cause impairment and create an unsafe working environment for the member or surrounding members of the Department.

In Service Conduct

- 2.3 All members when responding in service for the Department will:
 - 2.3-1 Respond for service in accordance with "South Van Zandt Fire Department-SOP for Emergency Responses."
 - 2.3-2 Not be relieved until the officer in charge of the incident or the place of assignment has consented to the member's leaving.
 - 2.3-3 Participate in drills and other Department training activities as directed and be thoroughly familiar with the apparatus, tools, and equipment to which they are assigned and may be required to use or operate in order to perform their assigned duties.
 - 2.3-4 Accept responsibility for the performance of the duties of a higher rank when assigned to act in such positions.
 - 2.3-5 Promptly answer all emergency pages when dispatched and travel to their place of assignment following all traffic laws.
 - 2.3-6 Exert their greatest effort to perform to the best of their ability under all circumstances. Cowardice, inefficiency, indifference, ineptitude, or negligence in the performance of duty by members will result in disciplinary action.

- 2.3-7 Maintain emergency equipment in an optimum state of readiness within the limits of their abilities and available resources.
- 2.3-8 When operating at a fire scene, be alert for signs of arson or incendiary, secure or preserve such evidence or conditions, and notify the incident commander immediately.
- 2.3-9 Exercise precautionary measures and good judgment to avoid injury to themselves and others while responding for service, and at all times exercise caution consistent with the performance of the duty to avoid unnecessary damage or loss of Department equipment.
- 2.3-10 Exhibit courtesy and respect to all officers, acting officers, and mutual aid officers, and refer to and address officers by their proper rank and name.
- 2.3-11 Refrain from any act of insubordination. Insubordination includes, but is not limited to:
- 2.3-11.1 Striking or assaulting an officer.
 - 2.3-11.2 Willfully disobeying the lawful order of an officer. However, should a member receive a conflicting order, the member will notify the person issuing the conflicting order and be governed by that officer's instructions.
 - 2.3-11.3 Knowingly being untruthful to a superior officer
 - 2.3-11.4 Treating with contempt or being disrespectful in language or deportment toward any officer.
- 2.3-12 Not act in a rebellious, recalcitrant, obstinate, unmanageable, or resistant manner toward any officer.
- 2.3-13 Promptly notify the Chief of the Department or his designee of all matters coming to their attention that might affect the interest or welfare of the Department.
- 2.3-14 Promptly notify the Chief of the Department or his designee of any accident, sickness, or injury occurring to themselves while in the service of the Department.

- 2.3-15 Not fraudulently report themselves injured while in the service of the department when the injury occurred while not in the service of the department or the injury is nonexistent.
- 2.3-16 Exhibit courtesy and respect to other members of the Department and to the public, compatible with the performance of their duties.
- 2.3-17 Give their full name to any person on request.
- 2.3-18 Strive to work together with other members of the Department and at no time resort to physical violence.
- 2.3-19 Not engage in nor solicit any type of sexual conduct while in the service of the Department.
- 2.3-20 Not gamble on Departmental property.
- 2.3-21 Not bring alcohol onto Departmental property.
- 2.3-22 Present a neat, clean, and professional appearance to the public and comply with the uniform and appearance standards promulgated by the Chief of the Department
- 2.3-23 Not smoke indoors in any Department property. Not use tobacco products while making contacts with the public. Any member using smokeless tobacco inside Departmental property is responsible for cleaning up after themselves.
- 2.3-24 Practice economy in the use of supplies, fuel, and metered utilities.
- 2.3-25 Not possess a firearm, or ammunition, or weapon when in the service of the department.
- 2.3-26 Drive safely and practice defensive driving techniques to minimize accidents.

Officers

- 2.4 All Officers and Acting Officers will:
 - 2.4-1 Assure there are no unnecessary delays in responding to emergency pages
 - 2.4-2 Perform the duties, accept the responsibilities and have the authority of the rank which they are occupying, be it a temporary or permanent assignment.
 - 2.4-3 Consider their duty to set especially good examples and require the members under their commands to measure up to the high standards of the Department.
 - 2.4-4 Recognize and understand their role in the Department as representatives of the Department's management.
 - 2.4-5 Make every effort to be knowledgeable of, understand, and communicate Departmental policies, rules, regulations, and procedures in a positive manner.
 - 2.4-6 Consider it their duty and obligation to support, put into effect, and enforce the policies, rules, regulations, and procedures of the Department and see that compliance is assured.
 - 2.4-7 Conduct themselves in a responsible manner and not misuse their rank or authority when dealing with subordinates.
 - 2.4-8 Report to the Chief of the Department any violations of rules, regulations, and procedures, or deficiencies in the performance of duties or any failure to perform duties by members.
 - 2.4-9 Respond to all questions and assist in resolving any problem that members may have regarding Departmental business and generally be attentive to members' departmental needs. If the members' concerns are beyond the officer's control or authority, promptly refer the member to the next higher authority in the chain of command.

- 2.4-10 Be responsible for work group morale and take actions of positive leadership to see that members work well together as a team.
- 2.4-11 Be responsible for assuring that members under their command are trained, competent, ready and able to respond, and provide the appropriate service to the public.
- 2.4-12 Be responsible for the enforcement of discipline.
- 2.4-13 Report incompetence, inefficiency, misconduct, and negligence of any member.
- 2.4-14 Decide promptly any questions of their subordinates relative to the interpretation of regulations or orders, and in sudden emergencies prescribe the immediate action to be taken.
- 2.4-15 Routinely observe their subordinates' physical appearance and mental alertness to assure that members are fully capable of performing the requirements of their positions.
- 2.4-16 Direct operations at fires and other emergencies in accordance with current emergency procedures.
- 2.4-17 Cause fires to be extinguished with the least possible danger to life and property, prevent unnecessary water damage, take proper precautions against rekindle, and leave the premises in a safe condition.
- 2.4-18 See that a coordinated effort is conducted at the scene of incidents where other mutual aid departments or other entities are assisting.
- 2.4-19 File in an orderly and timely manner reports and records relative to the function of their position.
- 2.4-20 Be knowledgeable of all orders, directives, and other information applying to the operation of their command.
- 2.4-21 Check for completeness and accuracy of all reports with which they are concerned and forward reports through to the appropriate recipient.

- 2.4-22 Prevent members from exposure to unnecessary danger while in the service of the department.
- 2.4-23 Refrain from interfering in matters or operations for which an officer of equal rank is responsible, except with the consent of the latter or by orders from a higher ranking officer. This rule does not excuse an officer's responsibility to report violations of rules, regulations, or procedures.
- 2.4-24 Make inspections and investigations to keep informed of conditions in areas under their supervision.
- 2.4-25 See that the security of Department facilities and equipment is maintained at all times and is consistent with operational requirements.
- 2.4-26 Make inspection of personnel, equipment, and facilities to ensure cleanliness, neatness, and safety and see that a proper professional appearance is maintained.
- 2.4-27 Be directly responsible for the appearance of members and are specifically directed to take action to achieve compliance to Department rules.