Superior Subordinate Counseling

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Understand the rules

- How long is the exercise
- Is it a role-play scenario?
- Who can you interview?

What are the expectations ?

- Fire department culture
- City policies and procedures
- Outsider’s perspective

What to expect

- Current departmental issues
- Issues within your city
- Issues in the fire service

You must know:

- Your City's policies and procedures
- Your City's disciplinary process
- Your obligations as a Battalion Chief
- Your limitations as a Battalion Chief

You MUST:

- Respond and act as a Battalion Chief
  - Rely on personal power (difficult in the exam)
  - Utilize positional power when needed

The 8 step process

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- Provides the supervisor a system:
  - To explain the reason for the meeting
  - To be used for fact finding
  - For identifying corrective actions steps and articulating them to the employee

Step 1-Friendly Greeting

- Invite the employee into the office
- Set the ground rules (turn off cell phones, don’t interrupt)
- Consider taking the company out of service

Step 2-ID the Problem

- Explain the reason for the meeting
- Briefly state the facts (factual observations)
  - Policy violation
  - Training deficiency
  - Personnel issue
  - Personal issue
- List the most serious offense first

"You have been late the last five shifts. This is a violation of the Policies and creates problems for the Officer you are relieving"

Step 3-They Speak

- He or she speaks-You listen:
  - Allow the employee an opportunity to tell their side of the story.
  - Take notes – be specific
  - Pay attention

Step 4-You Speak

- They listen
- Paraphrase what the employee said (promotes dialogue and ties step 3 and 4 together)
  - “I understand that you’re saying that your babysitter was late”
  - “If I am understanding what you are saying, you have been late because your car keeps breaking down”
- Be specific with quotes
- Be receptive to corrections

You will very likely revert between steps 3 and 4

Step 5-Consequences

- Must have done your research FIRST
- Describe the consequences of current or repeat behavior:
  - Reference rules, regulations, policies, procedures, laws and customs.
- Be able to quote the infractions
- Don’t minimize the rules with statements:
  - ”I agree that the arrival time policy is stupid”
  - This undermines the policies and department

Step 6-Action Plan

- Here are my expectations (Reminder of their responsibilities)
  - May involve a daily drill to reinforce performance
- Set administrative controls-additional meetings, written documentation, etc (follow-up with benchmarks)
  - Set dates and times

Step 7-Review the Session

- Tie it all together
- Gain a common understanding of what has transpired and get buy in
- Clearly outline the consequences of future infractions – “Progressive discipline”

Step 8-Positive Closing

- Express confidence in the employee
  - Let the employee know that you believe in him and you do not expect future infractions
- Brief and to the point!

Union’s or Association’s responsibility

- Ensure the process is correct
- Give the employee a sense of security
- Remember, you want the employee to believe he was treated fairly.

Firefighter Bill of Rights

- Planned vs. unplanned meeting
- Employee has a right to union representation IF meeting can result in discipline.

Knowing Your Rights Can Save Your Job.

If you find you're being asked questions that might result in disciplinary action or criminal prosecution:

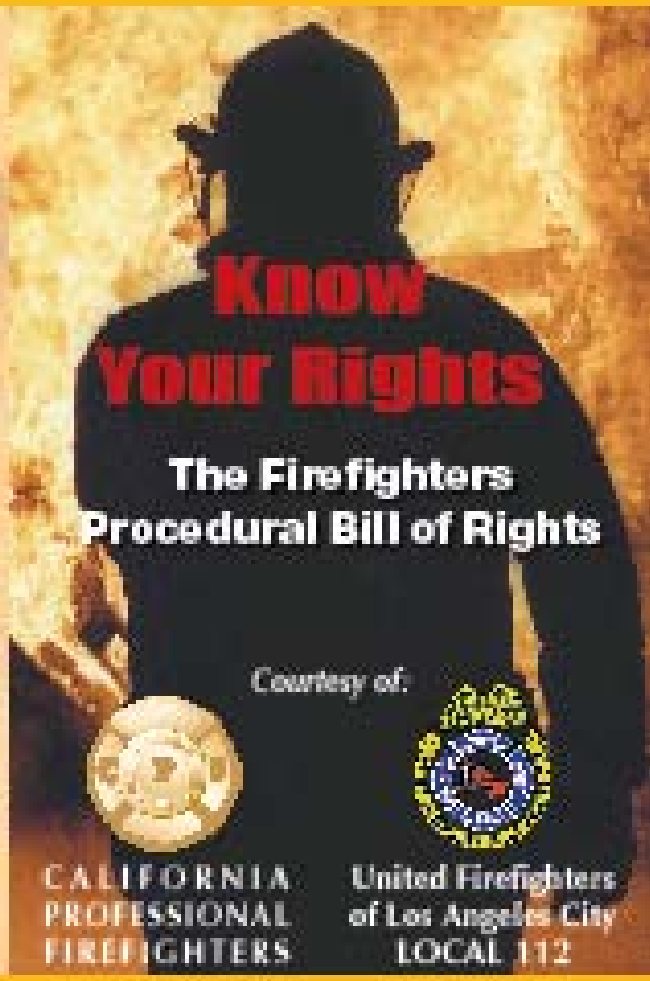
1. Ask if you are at risk of disciplinary action.
2. Ask for union representation before responding to *any* questions.
3. Insist that any statement be tape recorded.
4. Don't volunteer to take a lie-detector, alcohol or drug test.
5. Don't reveal any personal financial information without a court order.
6. Make note of physical or verbal abuse, threats, extortion or any other attempt to compel your answers.

Non-Waiver Statement

If you're compelled to make a statement or answer questions in violation of your right to representation or any of the rights listed above, demand that it be recorded and read the following:

I am making this statement involuntarily, in compliance with a direct order made under penalty of sanction and/or termination. In compelling my statement without representation, you are in violation of the California Government Code, Sections 3250 through 3262, and are subject to civil penalties prescribed by law. I do not waive any of my rights under this law, our current union contract, any other local, state or federal law, or my right to remain silent under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution.

United Firefighters of Los Angeles City
Local 112, International Association of Fire Fighters
1571 Beverly Boulevard, Suite 201
Los Angeles, California 90026-5704



Questions?