



## Division 08

## Health and Safety

# Chapter 14– Preventing Violence in the Work Place

March 2009

### POLICY

To establish a policy concerning work place conduct, work place security, and specific safety standards for firearms/weapons that is applicable to all members of the Fire/EMS Department.

Employees/members violating the provisions of this general order shall be immediately placed on administrative leave and/or removed from operations pending an investigation and administrative review of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

### DEFINITIONS

**Workplace Violence** – Any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting.

**Workplace** – Any location, either permanent or temporary, where an employee performs any work-related duty.

### PROCEDURES

#### 1. Background

The goal of preventing violence in the workplace is to provide employees with a place of employment that “is free from recognizable hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.”

Employees have the duty and obligation to bring potentially violent situations to the attention of their immediate supervisor or manager.

The objective is to ensure the highest standard of health and safety for all members and the general public and to provide for the efficient and effective operation of the Department. This shall be accomplished by stating what is acceptable work place conduct, recognizing breaches in work place security, establishing a policy regarding firearms and weapons, and training members to recognize potential threats to personal safety in the work place and on the emergency scene.

Regarding violence in the workplace, the Department will maintain a “zero tolerance” policy.

#### 2. Prohibited Conduct

##### Verbal

- Threats to inflict bodily harm, including vague or covert threats
- Abusive language and/or gestures toward supervisors, co-workers, or the public
- Making delusional statements inflicting harm
- Threats to destroy property

##### Physical

- Attempting or carrying out physical Assaults
- Striking, pushing, and other aggressive physical acts against another person
- Disorderly conduct (shouting, throwing, or pushing objects, and punching walls)



- Bringing guns or other weapons into the workplace (unless authorized)

### **Firearms/Weapons Policy**

The bringing of unauthorized firearms and other weapons into fire stations and/or other work sites is prohibited.

If a member is employed by a law enforcement agency that does not require the individual to carry an off-duty weapon, one should not be worn in or around the fire station. If the member is required to carry an off-duty weapon, every effort must be made to keep the weapon out of plain view when visiting the fire station. The off-duty weapon must not be visible to those persons entering the fire station. Approved gun lockers shall be provided by the station to secure weapons.

No firearms of any type will be allowed to be worn or carried by fire and rescue personnel who are involved in emergency operations or during training evolutions.

The practice of bringing weapons in for cleaning, repair, or storage is at the discretion of the career supervisor/volunteer chief. Ammunition must be kept separate from the firearm while in the station.

Fire stations that host turkey shoots or gun shows shall notify the Office of the Fire Chief 24 hours prior to the event.

Volunteer members who possess a gun permit for fund-raising activities shall follow the same guidelines as off-duty law enforcement officers.

**NOTE:** The above prohibition does not preclude authorized Prince George's County Fire Investigators from carrying out their official duties.

### **3. Appropriate Work Place Conduct**

All members shall conduct themselves in a courteous, efficient manner; be fair, impartial, and dignified in their relations with others.

- They shall be respectful and compliant to their supervisors.
- They shall refrain from using harsh and violent language and from disturbing other members unnecessarily.
- They shall not engage in altercations or boisterous arguments.
- Threats and physical altercations will not be tolerated.

### **4. Work Place Security**

It shall be the responsibility of the career supervisor/volunteer chief to ensure that a safe and secure work place exists for all members.

A periodic security assessment shall be done to ensure that a safe environment does exist. Items to be considered:

- Increased outdoor lighting in parking areas and corners of the building.
- Maintaining locks on windows and doors.
- Closing bay doors when not in quarters.
- Providing central entry points.
- Installing electronic security devices (i.e., cameras, buzzers, etc.).
- Questioning "strangers" in the work place.
- Background/security checks of new members.

### **Violence on Emergency Scenes**

All members shall be trained to recognize potentially violent emergency scenes.



Scenes of domestic violence are the most stressful and frequently erupt in shootings, stabbings, and fights involving police officers and emergency care providers. All members shall familiarize themselves with “street survival” skills, emergency radio procedures, and emergency identifications status (EI Status). Lesson plans for “street survival” can be obtained through the Fire/EMS Training Academy.

**REFERENCES**

N/A

**FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

N/A

**5. Crisis Intervention**

The Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department has in place several programs available to all members to help them cope with stress, personal problems, and environmental problems. It is the responsibility of all supervisors and members to look after the mental welfare of their coworkers. Early detection and diffusion of stress is the key to avoiding tragedies in the work place. All members shall be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress:

- Depression
- Frequent absences
- Talking louder than normal
- Being easily startled
- Increasing irritability and impatience
- Concentration and memory problems
- Sleeping problems
- Tendency to blame others for lack of success
- Increased use and/or abuse of alcohol and/or drugs

All members should make every effort to utilize the Employee Assistance Program, Volunteer Assistance Program, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team, and Peer Mediation Program.

**Failure to comply with orders contained herein will result in disciplinary action.**