

<b>Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association</b>	<b>Number: SOG- 1303</b> <b>Page 1 of 2</b>
<b>SUBJECT: Harassment</b>	<b>Effective Date: 11/18/2022</b>
<b>Written By: JB Carter</b>	<b>Issued By: <i>AM Knick</i></b>

**PURPOSE:** To provide for a healthy environment for all members regarding sexual, racial, or other types of harassment, and to provide procedures for reporting, investigation, and resolution of complaints of harassment, sexual or otherwise.

Sean Knick

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of the Rappahannock County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association (the Association) and its member companies that all members have the right to work in an environment free from all forms of harassment. The Association does not condone, nor will it tolerate, any type of harassment directed towards its members. Therefore, the Association and its member companies will take direct and immediate action to prevent such behavior and to remedy all reported instances of harassment, sexual or otherwise.

**1. Prohibited Conduct:**

- No member shall either explicitly or implicitly ridicule, mock, deride, or belittle any other member.
  - Members shall not make offensive or derogatory comments based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin either directly or indirectly to another member. Such harassment is a prohibited form of discrimination under Commonwealth of Virginia and Federal employment laws and is also considered misconduct and is subject to disciplinary actions.
  - Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions regarding the offended party's status or position. Sexual harassment can also occur if such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a member's ability to perform his/her duties due to the creation of a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment.

**2. Responsibilities:**

- The Chief or his/her designee shall be responsible for preventing acts of harassment within each Association member company. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to:
  - Monitoring the work environment on a regular basis for signs that harassment may be occurring
  - Informing all members of the types of behaviors prohibited and the procedures involved for reporting and resolving complaints of harassment
  - Stopping any observed acts of harassment and taking appropriate steps to intervene when suspected harassment is occurring or has occurred.
- The Chief or her/his designee has the responsibility to assist any member who wishes to file a complaint of harassment in documenting and filing such a complaint.
- Each member is responsible for assisting in the prevention of harassment through the following acts:
  - Refraining from participation in, or encouragement of, such activities that could be perceived as harassment

- Reporting acts of harassment to an officer
- Encouraging a member who confides that he/she is being harassed to report these acts to an officer
- In the event of a complaint involving harassment, neither party shall make any statements to the press or other outside agency (except legal counsel) until an initial investigation has been completed.
- **Failure to take action to stop known harassment shall be grounds for disciplinary action.**

### 3. Complaint Procedures:

- Members encountering harassment shall tell the person that her/his actions are unwelcome and/or offensive. If the behavior persists, the member shall document all incidents of harassment to provide the full basis for an investigation and pending disciplinary action.
- Any member who thinks she/he is being harassed shall report the incident(s) to the Chief or her/his designee as soon as possible. Any delay in reporting an incident involving suspected harassment can undermine the investigation of said incident.
- The Chief or her/his designee will document the incident in question, including in such documentation any and all written or other evidence gathered by the complainant.
- Once the complaint has been received and documented an internal investigation shall take place, with both parties being given ample opportunity to present their respective cases before any action is taken. The investigation shall include a determination as to whether other members are being harassed by the person involved, and whether any other members participated in, encouraged, or witnessed the incident(s).
- The Chief shall inform both parties of the results of the investigation in writing within 25 days of the complaint.
- There shall be no retaliation against any member for filing a harassment complaint, assisting in the subsequent investigation, or acting as a witness for or against either party involved in the complaint.
- Either party may file a grievance/appeal in accordance with the By-Laws and/or Standard Operating Guideline of the member company if they disagree with the findings and/or actions resulting from the initial investigation. The Chief shall make all documentation available to both parties in case of an appeal.
- This policy does not preclude nor supersede any member from filing a harassment complaint or grievance with any appropriate outside agency.

Note that if the Chief is the subject of a complaint then the President of the member company should be notified and all references to "Chief" in this policy will then be "President".