

Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

PURPOSE

All Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District (URFPD) members will respond to the public in a courteous, caring, and appropriate manner. All citizen concerns and/or complaints regarding Fire District members and/or services will be addressed in a prompt, courteous, and positive manner.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Citizen complaints and/or concerns range from individual performance or nonperformance to the overall level of service delivery provided. Management and supervisory personnel will attempt to service and resolve complaints at the lowest appropriate level in the Department.

Should a citizen desire to make a formal complaint to a member, via telephone, email, etc., the complaint will be documented via a Complaint Record Form. The Complaint Record Form will be made available via the District's webpage or upon request. The form will be filled out as completely as possible by the complainant and/or the person completing the form. The completed form will be forwarded to the Fire Chief and the District Clerk where it will be assigned to the appropriate person, usually the Fire Chief or Board Chairman, for investigation. All completed complaints will be returned to the District Clerk for filing.

If a Board member receives a complaint from someone wishing to remain anonymous, that person shall be referred to the Chairman of the Board or Fire Chief whichever is most appropriate to provide for efficacy and validation. This will also assist in reducing non-productive or non-substantiated attempts to discredit a person or the agency due to prejudiced viewpoints or agendas. In all instances, anonymous complaints should be discouraged as it provides little opportunity for follow-up or to gather more information should more details be needed to adequately investigate the complaint.

All complaints alleging serious administrative or criminal misconduct will be given priority and investigated immediately and/or forwarded to the appropriate person(s) or organization(s).

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FIRE DISTRICT

Citizen complaints will be documented by the person receiving the complaint on a Complaint Record Form. If a complaint pertains to serious misconduct, the Fire Chief and/or the Board Chairman will be notified immediately. The completed Complaint Record Form will be forwarded immediately to the District Clerk and the Fire Chief so it can be recorded and assigned to the appropriate person for investigation.

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

Each complaint received by the District will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. Regardless of severity, each complaint should be regarded as an opportunity to examine our customer service at the point of contact.

Unless the complainant request “**no contact**” the investigating officer should contact the complainant as soon as possible to inform the complainant that their concern is being addressed. Upon contact, the following steps should be performed:

- Inform the complainant of your name and rank and how you relate to the area of concern.
- Restate the complaint as you understand it.
- Ask if your understanding of the complaint is correct.
- Reconcile any discrepancies.
- Ask complainant if they would like you to contact them when investigation is complete.
- **THANK THE COMPLAINANT FOR BRINGING THE CONCERNS TO YOUR ATTENTION.**
- Interview the individual/crew that the complaint was lodged against, and document the results.
- Discuss the call/incident that generated the complaint.
- Ask if anything unusual occurred.
- Describe the incident as related by the complainant.
- Discuss any discrepancies.

DISPOSITION

After considering all available information, the investigating officer will make one of the following findings:

- UNFOUNDED The alleged act did not occur.
- EXONERATED The act occurred but was justified, lawful and proper.
- NOT SUSTAINED The investigation produced information insufficient to prove or disapprove the allegation.
- SUSTAINED All or part of the act occurred as alleged. (A finding of "SUSTAINED" must be based on the existence of substantial fact in support of reasonable proof.)

DOCUMENTATION

The investigator will provide written documentation of his actions, stating the facts that include the statement/s of the individual/crew. In some cases the investigator will need to obtain written statement/s from the individual/crew, which will be attached to the Complaint Record Form.

FOLLOWUP

After the investigator has determined the appropriate "finding," a meeting should be held with the crew/individual named in the complaint. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the finding and any pertinent information. If corrective action is required, it will be outlined at this time. Many complaints will fall into the "**NOT SUSTAINED**" and "**EXONERATED**" category. These incidents should be thoroughly examined from a customer service point of view. The focus of the discussion concerning these incidents should be on how future encounters of a similar nature might be handled to avoid creating unhappy customers.

If the complainant requested follow-up, the investigator should, thank them for sharing their concerns and advise them that the complaint was investigated and proper action was taken.

THE COMPLETED COMPLAINT RECORD FORM AND ALL ATTACHMENTS WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE DISTRICT CLERK AND FILED ACCORDINGLY.

FIRE DISTRICT BOARD FOLLOWUP

Annually, or more frequent if prudent, the Fire Chief will provide a summary of complaints to the Board to include the initial complaint, the findings, and disposition, and whether corrective actions were necessary. In the event the complaint was related directly to the Fire Chief, the Board Chairman will follow the above policy/procedure and report at a Board meeting following appropriate public meeting laws, employee contracts/agreements, and other applicable requirements.