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# Discriminatory Harassment

## 1017.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to prevent department members from being subjected to discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment and retaliation. Nothing in this policy is intended to create a legal or employment right or duty that is not created by law.

This policy also applies to department elected officials (ORS 243.319).

## 1017.2 POLICY

The Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment that is free of all forms of discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment and retaliation. The Department will not tolerate discrimination against a member in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation, fringe benefits, and other privileges of employment. The Department will take preventive and corrective action to address any behavior that violates this policy or the rights and privileges it is designed to protect.

The nondiscrimination policies of the Department may be more comprehensive than state or federal law. Conduct that violates this policy may not violate state or federal law but still could subject a member to discipline.

## 1017.3 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

### 1017.3.1 DISCRIMINATION

The Department prohibits all forms of discrimination, including any employment-related action by a member that adversely affects an applicant or member and is based on actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and any other classification or status protected by law (ORS 659A.030; ORS 659A.082; ORS 659A.112).

Discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, is verbal or physical conduct that demeans or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual based upon that individual's protected class. It has the effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or creating a hostile or abusive work environment.

Conduct that may, under certain circumstances, constitute discriminatory harassment can include making derogatory comments, making crude and offensive statements or remarks; making slurs or off-color jokes; stereotyping; engaging in threatening acts; making indecent gestures, pictures, cartoons, posters, or material; making inappropriate physical contact; or using written material or department equipment and/or systems to transmit or receive offensive material, statements, or pictures. Such conduct is contrary to department policy and to a work environment that is free of discrimination.

# Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

## Operations Manual

### *Discriminatory Harassment*

---

#### 1017.3.2 RETALIATION

Retaliation is treating a person differently or engaging in acts of reprisal or intimidation against the person because the person has engaged in protected activity, filed a charge of discrimination, participated in an investigation, or opposed a discriminatory practice. Retaliation will not be tolerated.

#### 1017.3.3 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Department prohibits all forms of discrimination and discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment. It is unlawful to harass an applicant or a member because of that person's sex.

Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (a) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of employment, position, or compensation.
- (b) Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for any employment decisions affecting the member.
- (c) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a member's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

#### 1017.3.4 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Discrimination and discriminatory harassment do not include actions that are in accordance with established rules, principles, or standards, including:

- (a) Acts or omission of acts based solely upon bona fide occupational qualifications under the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries Civil Rights Division guidelines.
- (b) Bona fide requests or demands by a supervisor that the member improve the member's work quality or output, that the member report to the job site on time, that the member comply with Special District or department rules or regulations, or any other appropriate work-related communication between supervisor and member.

#### **1017.4 RESPONSIBILITIES**

This policy applies to all department members who shall follow the intent of these guidelines in a manner that reflects department policy and the best interest of the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District and its mission.

Members are encouraged to promptly report any discriminatory, retaliatory, or harassing conduct or known violations of this policy to a supervisor. Any member who is not comfortable with reporting violations of this policy to his/her immediate supervisor may bypass the chain of command and make the report to a higher-ranking supervisor or manager. Complaints may also be filed with the the District Clerk, or the Board Chair or Vice Chair.

Any member who believes, in good faith, that he/she has been discriminated against, harassed, or subjected to retaliation, or who has observed harassment, discrimination, or retaliation, is

# Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

## Operations Manual

### *Discriminatory Harassment*

---

encouraged to promptly report such conduct in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy.

Supervisors and managers receiving information regarding alleged violations of this policy shall determine if there is any basis for the allegation and shall proceed with resolution as stated below.

#### 1017.4.1 QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATION

Members with questions regarding what constitutes discrimination or sexual harassment, or retaliation are encouraged to contact a supervisor, a manager, the District Clerk, or the Board Chair or Vice Chair for further information, direction, or clarification.

#### 1017.4.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of supervisors and managers shall include but are not limited to:

- (a) Continually monitoring the work environment and striving to ensure that it is free from all types of unlawful discrimination, including harassment or retaliation.
- (b) Taking prompt, appropriate action within their work units to avoid and minimize the incidence of any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.
  - 1. Unless a member objects in writing, a supervisor designated by the Fire Chief shall follow up with a member once every three months for a year following the date on which the member reported the incident to determine whether the alleged harassment has stopped or if the member has experienced retaliation (ORS 243.321).
- (c) Ensuring that their subordinates understand their responsibilities under this policy.
- (d) Ensuring that members who make complaints or who oppose any unlawful employment practices are protected from retaliation and that such matters are kept confidential to the extent possible.
- (e) Making a timely determination regarding the substance of any allegation based upon all available facts.
- (f) Notifying the Fire Chief or the District Clerk in writing of the circumstances surrounding any reported allegations or observed acts of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation no later than the next business day.

#### 1017.4.3 SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

Supervisors and managers shall be aware of the following:

- (a) Behavior of supervisors and managers should represent the values of the Department and professional standards.
- (b) False or mistaken accusations of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation can have negative effects on the careers of innocent members.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent supervisors or managers from discharging supervisory or management responsibilities, such as determining duty assignments, evaluating or counseling members, or issuing discipline, in a manner that is consistent with established procedures.

# Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

## Operations Manual

### *Discriminatory Harassment*

---

#### **1017.5 INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS**

Various methods of resolution exist. During the pendency of any such investigation, the supervisor of the involved member should take prompt and reasonable steps to mitigate or eliminate any continuing abusive or hostile work environment. It is the policy of the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District that all complaints of discrimination, retaliation, or harassment shall be fully documented, and promptly and thoroughly investigated.

##### **1017.5.1 SUPERVISOR RESOLUTION**

Members who believe they are experiencing discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should be encouraged to inform the individual that the behavior is unwelcome, offensive, unprofessional, or inappropriate. However, if the member feels uncomfortable or threatened or has difficulty expressing the member's concern, or if this does not resolve the concern, assistance should be sought from a supervisor or manager who is a rank higher than the alleged transgressor.

##### **1017.5.2 FORMAL INVESTIGATION**

If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the supervisory resolution process, a formal investigation will be conducted.

The person assigned to investigate the complaint will have full authority to investigate all aspects of the complaint. Investigative authority includes access to records and the cooperation of any members involved. No influence will be used to suppress any complaint and no member will be subject to retaliation or reprisal for filing a complaint, encouraging others to file a complaint, or offering testimony or evidence in any investigation (ORS 659A.199).

Formal investigation of the complaint will be confidential to the extent possible and will include but is not limited to details of the specific incident, frequency and dates of occurrences, and names of any witnesses. Witnesses will be advised regarding the prohibition against retaliation, and that a disciplinary process, up to and including termination, may result if retaliation occurs.

Members who believe they have been discriminated against, harassed, or retaliated against because of their protected status are encouraged to follow the chain of command but may also file a complaint directly with the Fire Chief, the District Clerk, or the Board Chair or Vice Chair.

##### **1017.5.3 ALTERNATIVE COMPLAINT PROCESS**

No provision of this policy shall be construed to prevent any member from seeking legal redress outside the Department. Members who believe that they have been harassed, discriminated against, or retaliated against are entitled to bring complaints of employment discrimination to federal, state, and/or local agencies responsible for investigating such allegations. Specific time limitations apply to the filing of such charges. Members are advised that proceeding with complaints under the provisions of this policy does not in any way affect those filing requirements.

#### **1017.6 DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLAINTS**

All complaints or allegations shall be thoroughly documented on the appropriate forms and in a manner designated by the Board Chair or Vice Chair. The outcome of all reports shall be:

# Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

## Operations Manual

### *Discriminatory Harassment*

---

- (a) Approved by the Board Chair or Vice Chair, or the District Clerk, depending on the ranks of the involved parties.
- (b) Maintained in accordance with the established records retention schedule.

#### 1017.6.1 NOTIFICATION OF DISPOSITION

The complainant and/or victim will be notified in writing of the disposition of the investigation and the actions taken to remedy or address the circumstances giving rise to the complaint.

#### 1017.7 TRAINING

All new members shall be provided with a copy of this policy as part of their orientation. The policy shall be reviewed with each new member. The member shall certify by signing the prescribed form that the member has been advised of this policy, is aware of and understands its contents, and agrees to abide by its provisions during the member's term with the Department.

All members shall receive annual training on the requirements of this policy and shall certify by signing the prescribed form that they have reviewed the policy, understand its contents, and agree that they will continue to abide by its provisions.

#### 1017.8 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The District Clerk should consult with the Special District human resources manager to ensure that all required notifications regarding unlawful employment discrimination are available to all former, current, and prospective employees, as appropriate (ORS 243.319; ORS 243.323).

When any member complains about discriminatory harassment, the person receiving the complaint should provide a copy of this policy to the member (ORS 243.319).

A member may file a complaint with the Bureau of Labor and Industries and may have other legal remedies under Oregon law (ORS 243.319).

- (a) Administrative complaints regarding federal discrimination claims must be filed within 300 days of the alleged unlawful employment practice (42 USC § 2000e-5(e)(1)).
- (b) Administrative complaints regarding state discrimination claims must be filed within five years of the alleged unlawful employment practice (ORS 659A.820(3)).
- (c) A civil lawsuit alleging state discrimination claims must be filed within five years of the alleged unlawful employment practice (ORS 659A.875).
- (d) A civil lawsuit alleging federal discrimination claims must be filed within 90 days of the receipt of a right to sue letter from the Bureau of Labor and Industries and/or the EEOC (42 USC § 2000e-16(c)).
- (e) The statute of limitation periods for crimes related to sexual harassment vary, from two to 12 years.
- (f) Claims made against the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District require advance notice pursuant to ORS 30.275 (ORS 243.319).

# Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District

## Operations Manual

### *Discriminatory Harassment*

---

A member may file a complaint with the Department within four years from the date of the alleged incident or within the time limitation specified in ORS 659A.875, whichever is greater (ORS 243.321).

Members who believe they have been subjected to workplace harassment may access available community services and any support services provided by the Department, such as the employee assistance program (ORS 243.319).

No member will be required or coerced into a nondisclosure agreement (requiring confidentiality) or a non-disparagement agreement (prohibiting any negative statements about the Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District or its members in any form of communication). A member may voluntarily enter into an agreement that contains a nondisclosure or non-disparagement provision and has a minimum of seven days to revoke the agreement (ORS 243.323).