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Introduction

In the Novato Fire District you are not just an employee - you are a member, part of a family and a team. You become a member the day you join the organization in any capacity and put on the NFD uniform. We are a family in the sense that we spend a considerable amount of time together and must get along. We are a team in the sense that we must always pull together to get the job done.

The “NFD Way” describes the philosophy of our family and our team. It is intended to communicate to existing and new members the expectations of the way members are treated in the system, expectations for individual behavior and performance, guidelines for leadership, the importance of our history and the general approach that we all use when interacting with each other. This is the “Novato Fire District Way” or “NFD Way.”

The NFD Way is based on the fundamental principle that our members are the foundation of this organization; therefore, the organization can be no better or stronger than its membership. Being a member of the Novato Fire District is more than an occupation; it includes a commitment and responsibility to the public and to the other members of our family and team. This commitment must be backed with individual responsibility and accountability, and a commitment to the organizational goals and values.

The NFD Way is a product of the relationship between individual members, labor, supervisors, managers, and our elected officials. It represents the input of all members. It is a dynamic document and will need to be revised periodically.

The NFD Way is our creed. It defines us. The responsibility to learn and practice the “NFD Way” is ours. We are all members of this family and team by choice. Nobody forced us to apply for our membership, nor does anyone internally force us to remain a member. To a great extent, it is our voluntary entry into our organization, our team, and our family that attracts people to our organization.

We are committed to excellence internally and externally. We avoid doing “just good enough to get by,” and avoid actions that are destructive to each other. Our pride in the organization and our positive commitment to quality and to each other have made us what we are today and through constant assessment and change, will sustain us in the future.

Cooperation
It seems that many members judge the organization by how they are treated during bad times. In some organizations it is said that when a member is in trouble, they find out how the organization really feels about them. It can also be said that when the organization is in trouble, it may find out how the members really feel about it. If we are going to enjoy the good times that come with being a Novato Fire District Member, then we must come together and endure the bad times that also come with the affiliation. When we became members, we gave up our ability to misbehave. We may all suffer in the community because of the actions of one of us. Remembering this should help guide our conduct at all times.

The philosophy described in “NFD Way” provides in great detail the way our members are to perform, behave, treat each other and interact, no matter what level they attain during their careers. Living this philosophy is not easy. It is extremely difficult and requires a constant, conscious effort on the part of all of us, each and every day of our lives. This philosophy does not intend to establish a “secret society” or smother internal disagreement within the organization. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the organization can remain committed to its mission, and at the same time, improve the capability of the members, keeping them motivated, healthy, and productive.

The Novato Fire District is not perfect, and nobody said it was. However, it will only be as good as we commit to making it. Organizational imperfections will always exist and can provide the clues needed to direct change and create improvement in the system. If we dwell on these imperfections and place them above all the exceptional things occurring in the organization, we will wallow in the downside of living, whether at work or in other aspects of our lives. But if we recognize imperfections as opportunities to improve, then we can keep them in perspective and continue to move the organization forward.

Athletic teams have mascots, churches have rituals, commercial enterprises have slogans, and countless private organizations, have statements of philosophy that define and express their beliefs. The “NFD Way” reminds each of us of our creed, our history and our code of behavior. Since it is something every member has in common, it helps bond us, providing the glue that holds us together. The way we treat one another is the starting point and the indispensable quality of healthy families, productive teams, and lasting friendships.
Cultural Philosophy
Cultural Philosophy

Our members are frequently asked “what do you like about working for the Novato Fire District?” The answer to this question is simple; our people and our cultural philosophy. This section of the NFD Way was developed to describe our cultural philosophy. It describes expectations that for positive, constructive interaction. It sets forth the standards and expectations we, as a team, are dedicated to achieving, and to be a standard by which to measure our internal behavior as well as our organizational health.

Each of us is responsible and accountable for our own attitude and performance. A positive work environment is maintained by commitment and self-discipline. Members are expected to manage their own behavior in a manner that reflects the cultural philosophy of our organization.

Each member’s stature in the organization will be reinforced by his/her conduct and performance. There are some things that only you can do for yourself. No system can overcome an individual’s lack of personal respect or respect for others. To simplify this statement, you will only receive the respect that you earn, no matter what your formal position in the organization. Your reputation is one of your most valuable possessions; focus on it, and remember - it starts the day you join the family.

There are really very few organizational secrets, and creating unnecessary intrigue over an issue can result in distrust in the system. Other than personal problems, disciplinary actions, issues involving litigation, and perhaps politically sensitive issues that require appropriate timing to be effective, it is best to keep issues in the organization out in the open for discussion.

Effective teams communicate well internally and externally and demonstrate respect and consideration for all members of the organization regardless of rank or tenure. Kindness and care must be practiced throughout the entire organization, from the top down and from the bottom up. As individuals, we are very important, but never more important than the team itself.

When describing any guiding set of principles or underlying beliefs, concepts, or expectations, it is difficult not to sound idealistic. We are a group with selective membership and each member has to choose to belong. If individuals choose to belong, there are expectations and standards of behavior that are not optional. We individually and collectively care about the well-being of our fellow members and are concerned with preserving the well-being of our organization because it serves the common good of our members and our community.

Internally there are four behaviors which shall be practiced by all members. Remember these behaviors and practice them on a daily basis.

Consideration: Be considerate and respectful of values, ideals, family, possessions, and feelings.

Discretion: Be discreet in the things we say and do to each other; don’t gossip or spread rumors.

Acceptance: Accept the differences in one another. These differences make us stronger as a team and better able to serve the needs of our diverse internal and external community.

Unity: Value the unity of the District, not only in good times, but in difficult times as well.
All members of the District are expected to practice these behaviors throughout their careers. The effectiveness of the group cannot be jeopardized by petty interpersonal conflicts that detract from to the mission of the District.

All NFD members are human beings first. Members have a right to be different as long as their behavior, appearance, and job performance are not in conflict with the organization policies, procedures, and philosophies including the “NFD Way.” Honoring and respecting individual and cultural diversity is critical in our organization and society in general. Being flexible and non-judgmental are keys to developing heightened levels of acceptance and understanding within the organization.

Life can be a difficult journey. Our organization has decided that we do not want a work atmosphere that contributes to this difficulty. We hire our members with the expectation that, barring an unusual set of circumstances, they will remain members for most of their adult work life.

They should be encouraged to devote their energy to improving their performance and the organization in general, rather than being overly concerned about the basic security needs of survival.

Ideals

The “NFD Way” defines the organization cultural philosophy and requires that all members must:

- Provide their best support to each other
- Possess the essential attributes that exemplify the “NFD Way”
- Seek opportunities to create change in the organization in order to continue to be successful
- Take responsibility for the health of the organization
- Support, abide by, and promote the “NFD Way”
- Pass on tradition, history, and leave no one behind
- Take personal responsibility for their own attitude, behavior, and performance
- Be nice

Supporting Each Other

In situations where self-discipline breaks down, either training or disciplinary action or a combination of both may be imposed. If disciplinary action or job-related failures occur, the District and its members have a responsibility to support and help those involved “get back in” or “re-enter” the organization, as long as the members are willing to admit their failures and put forth a sincere effort to help themselves. All members have an inherent responsibility to reach back and support those behind them or those who have somehow lost their way.

Another critical issue in the overall effectiveness of the District and the well-being of all members is a sincere concern for one another’s welfare. This is difficult to maintain unless everyone understands its importance. We simply cannot be effective in serving the public if we cannot cooperate with each other. Verbal and physical abuse, malicious actions, gossiping, and harassment of fellow members have no place at Novato Fire District.
Member support includes the following organizational and responsibilities: demonstrating equality, courtesy, and respectful treatment of all members irrespective of rank, status, or tenure

- Offering **life-time membership** beginning on the date of hire
- Being advocates for all members regardless of seniority or rank
- Providing opportunities to “get back in” to the organization
- Providing health, fitness, medical, rehab support, and complete EAP services
- Offering on-going education and training opportunities
- Providing peer-based management and support
- Avoid bailing out on other members
- Continuous honest communications between all levels
- Not leaving our “wounded” behind
- Remembering family members are also part of the organization

**Members Must Possess Essential Attributes that Exemplify the NFD Way**

Each member must accept the **responsibility** associated with maintaining our environment, delivering quality service, cultivating change and improvements in the organization. This requires a high level of **commitment** by all involved if it is to be effective. It often demands placing the best interests of the organization and the public we serve first, and our own personal interests or needs second. **Personal respect** and **individual integrity** are essential ingredients of a positive, unified work environment, and a healthy organization.

NFD Members are:

- Always helpful, respectful, and nice to each other and the public
- Smart, skilled, productive, and self disciplined
- Inquisitive but respectful in their demeanor
- Committed, accountable, loyal, cooperative, and team players
- Healthy and physically fit
- Appreciative of NFD benefits, members, and the NFD Community
- Positive, constructive, supportive, and forgiving

NFD Members are willing to:

- Seek the truth and clarify issues rather than spreading gossip and rumors
- Admit when they are wrong and take responsibility for their actions
- Accept when they don’t get their way and not complain about it
- Coordinate, lead, and take responsibility at every level, everywhere, and at any time
- Maintain an on-going commitment and sincere desire to be a member
- Provide a success oriented environment for all members
- Help members “get back” into the system
Members Seek Opportunities to Create Change in the Organization in Order to Continue to be Successful

Organizations are not static, they are constantly changing and evolving. At the Novato Fire District we have made the decision to commit to making this change a positive and healthy experience for our members and the public; however when change becomes controversial, like any healthy family or team, we agree to resolve differences “in-house” and not publicly. The District provides opportunities for members to provide input, channel concerns, criticisms, suggestions, and complaints within the structure of the organization. However, once a decision has been reached, it is the member’s responsibility to support it as if it were their own.

The “NFD Way” is not intended to smother internal disagreement or to stifle individuality. It is intended to describe and maintain an environment in which the District can remain committed to our mission to care for, protect, and serve the community and at the same time, continue to improve the capabilities of the District and our members. At times we must be willing to subordinate ourselves to the group in order to make the team successful and to maintain its cohesiveness.

We must regard problems and imperfections in our organization and our members as opportunities to improve. We must not dwell on them to the point of missing the positive aspects.

The organization and members will support the NFD change environment by:

- Considering change as a regular event
- Assuring that change is a well managed problem-solving process
- Helping other members adapt to change
- Admitting when change hasn’t worked and make the changes necessary for success always striving for common goals and consensus
- Pursuing change creatively and actively
- Communicating change and ensuring that the decision to change is inclusive of all affected members
- Supporting change that is best for the organization and community, not just the individual member or group
- Maintaining the latest equipment and technology through an active Research and Development process

Members Take Responsibility for the Organization Health

We must all accept the responsibility associated with maintaining our organization’s health. Maintaining a healthy work environment requires a high level of commitment by all members. It is far from a “good ole boy” system, and it demands incredible dedication and support to be successful.

If NFD fails, it will do so from the inside, not the outside. Strife, gossip, and rumors are all internally destructive and cancerous to an organization’s health. We all lose if the inside atmosphere is negative. It’s where we spend our whole working life.
In order to prevent internal failures, members should hold themselves and each other responsible for:

- Avoiding participation in any activity that negatively impacts members or the organization reputation
- Processing disagreements or complaints internally and appropriately through the system
- Creating and maintaining a pleasant and fun work environment
- Managing and taking responsibility for their own affairs
- Avoiding exploiting negative times, passing on rumors, or gossiping about other members
- Avoiding the “us” vs. “they” mindset. “They” are “Us”.
- Avoid reinforcing, condoning, or supporting negative attitudes and/or behaviors
- Stopping inappropriate things from happening by taking immediate corrective action, in accordance with the “NFD Way”

Members Support, Abide by and Promote the “NFD Way”

The responsibility to learn and practice the NFD Way lies with each individual. It is positive commitment and hard work by our members that has made us what we are today, and through constant assessment and change, will sustain us in the future.

NFD Members should remember:

- The “NFD Way” works well for us, but members shouldn’t be arrogant or self-righteous about it with outsiders
- Members inherit what previous members produce; don’t pass on your problems to others
- The “NFD Way” is permanent and continuous
- The “NFD Way” is human-based
- Never take the “NFD Way” for granted - good times will only last as long as members continue to work at it

Members Pass on Tradition and History, Leaving No One Behind

Every organization is strengthened by tangible forms of rituals or “Rites of Passage.” Membership in the Novato Fire District is given when an individual joins the organization but acceptance is earned by completing certain “Rites of Passage.” These “Rites of Passage” are a tradition and an important part of our culture and are a celebration of our accomplishments. They are not intended to be punitive or a form of hazing. Our “Rites of Passage” are designed to determine a member’s ability to fit into the NFD family, to assess their ability to participate as an effective team member, and to measure their ability to do their job. NFD “Rites of Passage” include events such as the academy final exercise, academy graduation, and the final probationary test.
Rites of Passage for New Members

Completing a “Rite of Passage” usually ends in a celebration.

- Rites of Passage are set by the Organization and should be consistent between shifts and stations.
- Rites of Passage should not be punitive or hazing.
- Rites of Passage should celebrate first time accomplishments or big events.
- Rites of Passage are based on organizational history and what’s important.

If necessary, we must be willing to protect and defend what we have built. The District has in the past, and will continue in the future, to be periodically challenged for a number of reasons. We are most vulnerable when we believe we are not vulnerable. We each have the responsibility to leave this District better than we found it. We have the responsibility to pass along to future generations the traditions, values, knowledge, and determination that have moved our organization forward. This is our culture and the key to our success.

NFD Members should remember:

- All members are equally important
- Members protect, direct, mold, nurture, train the young, and the old
- Members who retire are still members
- Members appreciate the contributions of those who came before them; this is our culture
- NFD’s “past” gives members their identity; members should learn from it
- NFD’s “today” gives members their purpose; members should enjoy it
- NFD’s “tomorrow” gives members their future; members must plan for it
- Members’ current actions establish NFD’s future

Personal Responsibility for Attitude, Behavior, and Performance

Each member shall be responsible and accountable for his/her own attitude and behavior. Carrying resentment can only weigh you down and affect your performance. Our success is ultimately measured by our performance. Attitude and behavior can be molded and should be aimed at optimizing our performance.

Be Nice

“BE NICE” is good advice for all members to follow. The Golden Rule “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is alive and well in the Novato Fire District in matters of external customer service and internal member relations. Remember - nice begins with me.
Customer Service

The intent of this section is to document a common starting point for the execution of standard customer service behaviors in fairly standard situations. When standard situations do not exist, this procedure is intended to serve as a basis for the organization to creatively invent solutions through customer service firefighter empowerment.

Our Mission

The Novato Fire District’s mission is to care for, protect, and serve the community. Our member’s technical and human skills are the foundation of the Novato Fire District. The balance required to provide all the services our District is committed to delivering is rooted in being well trained and skilled. The value we place on technical and human skills is the same.

Our History in Customer Service

For over 75 years the Novato Fire District has been delivering service to the citizens of Novato. A long and proud history of exceptional service delivery, by our members, precedes each of us. Novato Fire District has been, and still is, a very progressive, positive, and encouraging place to work and deliver service. The organizational values and mission statement of the Novato Fire District describe this well.

Considering the length of time we have been providing this high level of service, the use of the term “customer” is a fairly recent addition to our organizational vocabulary. Traditionally, we have called the people we take care of, “patient” or “victim”. These traditional terms are limiting and are not indicative of the high level of service and concern the members of the District demonstrate to the community.

Definitions and Value of Customer Service

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the term “customer” both formally and informally. “Customer” is formally defined as “one who buys goods or services,” and it’s informally defined as “any person with whom one has dealings.” Our organization traditionally adopts an informal approach and our organizational vocabulary is simple and informal. The Fire District no longer limits its organizational definition of the term “customer” to only its formal interpretation. We have expanded our definition to include any person who receives our services and anyone with whom our members have dealings. Examples of this expanded definition of our “customers” include:

- The actual service recipient
- Anyone who knows or is closely related to the service recipient (e.g., family, friends, neighbors, pets, etc.)
- The people we encounter, directly and indirectly, during our workday (e.g., members of agencies we do business with, residents and tourists who visit our work place, those who see us at work, and even those we pass on the road.)

These people are an integral part of our workday. We want to treat them in a positive way and include them in our customer service action plan. Every interaction with our customers is an opportunity to solve their problem and leave an impression that we are proud of.
It’s the Novato Fire District number one priority to deliver the best customer service possible because in doing so we are assured of fulfilling our mission “To care for, protect, and serve the community”. “Customer service” is generally defined as “the ability of an organization to consistently give their customers what they want.” It is the goal of the Novato Fire District to go beyond traditional customer. It is the goal of the Novato Fire District to exceed our customer’s expectations by providing exceptional customer service. Exceptional customer service is the result of an explicit, long term, planned, acted out, and refined organizational approach to service delivery. It requires a personal commitment as well as organizational support and leadership.

“Added value” is a phrase we attach to our organizational definition of exceptional customer service. “Added value” occurs anytime we go beyond our effective, timely, nice, customer-focused service to create a feeling of ‘WOW!’ with our customers. Added value only requires a little extra effort and leaves our customers with the feeling that we care and we’re nice. It’s the philosophy of the Novato Fire District to provide “added value service” whenever we have the opportunity.

The Benefits of a Customer Service Program

The organizational benefits of providing exceptional customer service with added value are numerous. These benefits include:

- Positive relationships and trust within our organization
- Positive relationships and trust within our community
- Secures and maintains adequate resources and benefits
- Happy customers, bosses, and workers
- Immediate positive job satisfaction
- Places us in the best position to compete
- It’s fun to be nice and do good things
- Doing it right eliminates bad press, liability, and extra paperwork
- It saves lives and property - that’s important to our customers
- It’s the right thing to do

Guidelines for Exceptional Customer Service

Our customers and their problems do not come with an instruction manual. Exceptional customer service and added value customer service are the result of a refined system where members of the Novato Fire District are empowered by the organization to operate between the lines to provide caring service with both quality and value. “Member Empowerment” means “the organization delegates official authority and trusts its members with the power to provide customer service to the highest level of their ability and imagination.” To determine if you are empowered to perform exceptional added value customer service, ask yourself:

- Is it the right thing for the customer?
- Is it the right thing for the District?
- Is it safe, legal, ethical, and nice?
- Is it something that would look appropriate to others?
- Is it on your organizational level?
- Is it something you are willing to be accountable for?
- Is it consistent with our District’s mission, values and policies?

If the answer to all of these questions is “yes,” then don’t ask permission - you are empowered by the organization to “JUST DO IT!”
Membership in the Novato Fire District Family carries with it a host of responsibilities and expectations. The awareness and the commitment to meeting all of them will ensure the success of our organization and the fulfillment of our mission.

The awareness and commitment begins with viewing everyone as our customer. It is our job to respond to the needs of our customers. The people who call us with their needs cannot be viewed as interruptions to our work. They are our work. This philosophy is defined in our Guiding Principles. We will continue to refine our Customer Service plan, train all our members on that plan, and then trust, empower and depend upon them to directly execute the plan properly and whenever the opportunity occurs.

Simply put “being nice” is the essence of the Customer Service philosophy. This becomes our mission statement in action. Be nice to customers, to each other, and to yourself. This must become the most powerful value we create. At an internal level it means that we treat everyone with respect, kindness, patience, and consideration. Our diversity must continue to be one of our greatest strengths. On the external level we respond skillfully, timely, professionally, and with courtesy to every customer need.

The Novato Fire District customer service expectation is that everyone in the system behave like the customer’s situation is an urgent event, from the time we know about it until it’s over.

**Guiding Principles**

The Novato Fire District Guiding Principles are designed to create a positive public impression, support our Mission Statement, and serve as a reminder of our daily commitment to the community and our customers.

- We are committed to the protection of life, property and the environment.
- We believe that the community is the reason for our existence.
- We will foster and sustain the trust of the community, and will protect that confidence through our attitude, conduct, and actions.
- We believe that all members of the community are entitled to our best efforts.
- We will strive for excellence in everything we do.
- We will serve the community with honesty, fairness, and integrity.
- We will pursue safe, effective, timely and economical solutions.
- We will provide professional, skilled and courteous customer service at all times.
- We will be sensitive to the diverse and changing needs of the community.

**Customer Service Opportunities**

The Novato Fire District has expanded its view of the customer to include those observing our actions. Family members, friends, police, and those in the bleachers watching the show, are all potential customer opportunities. This expanded view includes the less obvious customers such as those we encounter en route to and from our incidents. Members can consider a standard service delivery plan for dealing with these extended customers such as driving in a courteous manner, describing an emergency situation when appropriate to do so, explaining our actions, determining customer needs, providing the services necessary to assist customers...
in reconnecting their lives. And prior to leaving a scene, surveying the scene to ensure all opportunities to provide exceptional customer service have been met.

We have endless opportunities to consistently create a positive impression, feeling, perception, and memory wherever we are and with whomever we encounter.

This can be best accomplished by attempting to execute a standard problem solving approach to every incident we encounter. Because members are empowered to provide “added value” level Customer Service, we are only limited by our imagination and ability to creatively solve problems.

Because we are human and will find ourselves challenged by tough events or customers, we must put on our game face and then orchestrate a standard service delivery performance. On those occasions when we don’t feel nice, we must act nice. It’s our responsibility as professionals to solve the customer’s problem, even in tough situations. To our advantage, we work in teams and always have the help, support, and guidance of each other.

Management Responsibilities

- Hire people who want to help others and let them do that.
- Basic organizational behavior must become customer oriented.
- Continue to invest in Human Resources, our members.
- Customer Service is part of our ongoing developmental process.
- Supervisors and managers must take responsibility themselves, expand authority in others, and set the stage for good things to happen.
- The basic management objective is to have our team win because of the coaching and not in spite of it.
- Good coaching is almost invisible to the customer but good service is enormously obvious to everyone.

Support Personnel

The importance and impact of our internal support resources and relationships is enormous. It may be easy to forget about the people who work in areas removed from our own. The location of our fire stations allows us to provide great service to every inch of our District but the often cause us to lose perspective on how other the role of other District members affects our work. Everyone including elected officials, administrators, training, fire loss management, administrative services, support services, firefighters and medics, medical services, dispatchers, and volunteers are working together to enhance and affect the services we deliver. It’s important to remember that how we treat each other is linked to the quality of the external services we deliver to our customers.

Awards and Recognition Program

Awards and rewards have long been associated with the positive motivation of both individuals and teams. They can help motivate an individual or team to perform a task, complete a goal, excel in job performance, and perform outstanding and exceptional customer service. Recognition does not have to be extravagant to be effective. The small ways we say “good job” and “thank you” to each other and our customers goes a long way.
The true rewards come in the way of job satisfaction, continued improvement of work conditions, benefits and wages, political clout and pride in being associated with a quality organization. Over the course of a career, customer service “being nice and always doing the right thing” allows us another opportunity to tap into the spirit of being a member, to feel immediate job satisfaction, and to make a difference to those we serve and those we serve with.

Positive reinforcement is simple and extremely effective. Positive feedback, even when it merely reinforces that we are doing our jobs helps us feel appreciated and valued. It sends the member the message that the service you provide is important to the Novato Fire District and the customer. The Novato Fire District has a variety of resources that allow our members to reward positive behavior and performance at every level, as well as, outside our organization. Telling each other and our customers that they are valued and what they do is important, when genuine, promotes good will – a form of recognition everyone needs for continued success.
Ethics

The NFD Way serves as an outstanding compass for how we treat each other internally as a family, how we treat the public and the community we serve. This section defines how we treat those we meet in the performance of our job, ethically.

Ethics is defined as the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation, or a set of moral principles or values; a theory or system of moral values; the principles of conduct governing an individual or group.

As a member of the Novato Fire District your ethics, your crew’s ethics and companies ethics affect how you deliver quality service. The public demands that the ethics of its firefighting and support personnel be above reproach. The dishonesty of a single member may impair public confidence and cast suspicion upon the entire District. These guidelines define how we remain above ethical reproach on a daily basis in the course of our assigned duties as we interact with the public, businesses, and elected officials.

- Ethics is the essence of your self worth.
- It determines how you present yourself.
- It affects how you are perceived.
- It determines how you are respected and is a measurement of your character.

As a public servant sworn to serve and protect the public your integrity is held to the highest standard possible.

NFD Members Will:
- Follow all laws and use information gained from our positions only for the benefit of those we are entrusted to serve.
- Remain politically neutral
- Assure that requests for information made by the public, media, other agencies and elected officials be responded to by the proper District authority promptly and accurately.
- Conduct ourselves in a manner that is legally and morally above reproach

NFD Members Will Not:
- Use confidential information gained from our positions for our own gain or the gain of others.
- Seek special favors from the public for ourselves or groups that we represent.
- Use our District positions to endorse candidates or political causes or use District funds, time, personnel, or equipment for political activity.
- Individually benefit from the generosity of the community by accepting monetary gifts of any kind, alcohol or non-monetary gifts with a value in excess of $50.00.
- Have a material or financial interest in any private business or professional activity that would be, or appear to be, in conflict with District job responsibilities.
- Have a material or financial interest in any private business or professional activity that would tend to impair independent judgment or actions in the performance of District duties.

If it appears to be unethical, assume that it is.
Leadership
The Leader’s Role

Leadership and the leadership role is about purpose and direction. In the leadership role you deal with strategic issues. **Strategic issues affect the whole organization.** If you happen to be at the top of the organization, that means the whole organization. If you head up a smaller sub unit, like a division or a fire company, strategy affects your entire division or company.

As you move up the organizational hierarchy, you’re likely to have a greater proportion of your time devoted to the leadership role and a lesser proportion to the supervisory role. You don’t get a choice about whether you’re a leader or not. You’re a leader because that’s what the people who work for you expect you to be. They will look to you for purpose and direction.

There are many leaders in the Novato Fire District. Some are formal leaders who have this responsibility not only because of their structured positions in the District, but also because of demonstrated ability. Others are informal leaders who do not hold structured positions of leadership in the District, but are viewed by the members as leaders just the same. This leadership responsibility, whether formal or informal, is one of the most critical elements in the overall effectiveness and well-being of the District. As a leader, formal or informal, you are always setting an example, whether intentional or not. Formal and informal leaders should periodically ask themselves if their words or actions are undermining their ability to address future situations or problems that they may encounter with members of the District.

Leader’s Standards

It is extremely difficult for a leader to act unprofessionally in his/her work group and then attempt to take a professional approach to problem solving with the same group of members. As a leader, your actions will speak much louder than anything you say and your actions will be constantly analyzed by your peers.

- Leaders respect each other and the members of the District.
- Leaders don’t take credit for the actions or ideas of others.
- Leaders give praise and credit at every opportunity. Leaders work in a spirit of cooperation, not competition.
- Leaders share information with other leaders, not withhold it for their own advantage.
- Leaders are sensitive to the overall good of the organization and do not circumvent the chain of command for personal gain.
- Responsible leaders are concerned about the impact of their actions and how their effect on the organization and members.
- Leaders understand that the most effective change occurs from the bottom up, not the top down.
- Leaders coach their members, relay good news and bad and give positive feedback that works. Leaders demonstrate self awareness and a willingness to accept feedback and continuously develop.
- Leaders lead with respect not with the badge.
- Leaders must be consistent.

Goals
Problem Solving

Leaders must avoid taking every problem they encounter personally. This will usually serve no purpose other than to make a positive solution almost impossible to achieve and to make young, healthy leaders old and sick before their time. True leaders, when faced with problems involving people, which most problems do, use an approach that is directed not only towards solving the immediate problem, but also improving the situation and the organization for the future. This not only helps improve the particular situation encountered, but also teaches other current and future leaders in the District a positive approach to problem solving. It is an inherent responsibility of current Novato Fire District leaders to develop, promote, and instruct a capable cadre of leaders for the future.

After a leader has been involved in resolving a problem, he/she should attempt to objectively evaluate his/her effectiveness and apply what was learned from the experience to other situations. A leader’s performance in a given situation will fall into one of three categories.

- POSITIVE - The leader’s involvement contributed to a positive, effective outcome.
- NEUTRAL - The leader’s involvement had no effect on the outcome.
- NEGATIVE - The leader’s involvement made the situation worse.

Obviously, whenever possible, the leader would like to be rated in the “POSITIVE” category. This should be a performance goal for leaders throughout the District. Others in non-leadership positions are going to rate you using this scale; you may as well use it also. If you don’t know how you rate on the scale, ask.

All leaders in the District should share their expectations up front, in a non-confrontational and non-threatening manner, with people for whom they are responsible and stress the importance of accountability of each member. This sharing of expectations and accountability must be a dialogue not a monologue between the supervisor and the subordinate. Those expectations need to be realistic and in concert with the overall expectations of the District. There should be no doubt as to what is expected regarding behavior and performance. Everyone should be well aware of what is allowed and what is not allowed in the system. Leaders must remember that if they condone a particular unacceptable act or substandard performance, they will most likely see it again in the future. Someone once said, “If you condone it, you own it.” NFD supervisors should never pass on a behavior or performance problem to another supervisor.

“Followership”

Another important element of effective leadership in the District is effective “followership”. Every leader is a follower in some other District group, function, or relationship. It is hard to sustain a reputation as an effective leader when you are an ineffective follower. Place a high level of importance on follower ship, and don’t do things to your leaders that you wouldn’t want your followers to do to you.
Supervision
Supervision and Leadership

The fire service began and evolved as a paramilitary organization. A great emphasis was placed on rank. It was designed in this fashion because the occupation is dangerous and someone had to be firmly in charge. The emergency scene is an appropriate arena for autocratic management. Not everyone can be in charge of a life-threatening emergency where decisions must be made quickly. Unfortunately the autocratic management style was also carried into the firehouse environment and used to manage day to day activities. That management method may have been effective in the past, but history has demonstrated that autocratic “do as I say” management limits quality and productivity. This style is characterized by a supervisor setting tasks and standards which members are expected to follow without consultation and compromise. Members are told how the work is to be done without being asked how it could be done better. If members resist or question, threats or punishment are used or privileges are withheld thereby creating an adversarial environment.

Our organizational approach to achieving results is very important in the motivation of the members. We take a management by exception approach to managing our members because our members are exceptional people. The assumption that most people require close supervision and control is not accurate in the Novato Fire District. Micromanagement diminishes the performance of highly motivated, self-starting individuals, insults the majority of the workforce, or scares away good employees. This is not to say that some control is not needed, but carried to the extreme, it is not effective in the Novato Fire District.

Positive motivation and coaching is much more effective in motivating members to be productive than simply identifying and punishing negative behavior or performance. Supervisors must personify this philosophy.

The Supervisor’s Role

Supervisors play an important role in the overall scheme of things in the District. Their effectiveness is based solely upon the way they carry out their responsibilities and their style of managing others. In supervision, you deal with individuals and tasks. No matter what level you are in the District, you have some supervision work to do. You will have people directly responsible to you and you will talk directly about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. That’s supervision.

All Supervisors, no matter what their level in the District, are expected to carry out their supervision work in a considerate, respectful manner. Positive motivation is the preferred method of guiding members to be effective and more productive. Positive reinforcement, “catching members doing something right,” and citing positive performance as an example for others to follow, has proven to be much more effective than identifying negative behavior or performance, punishing it, and expecting that to serve as the example from which others are to learn. Positive, or in some cases improved behavior and performance, should be rewarded in some way at every opportunity. Unacceptable behavior or performance should never be rewarded nor overlooked. This approach can be a powerful motivating force. It is much more powerful than simply guarding the workforce and punishing the perceived non-conformists. There is documented evidence that structured, positive programs designed to improve the performance of one or more members of the organization are usually effective.
It is difficult, if not impossible, for a person to out-perform his/her self-image. A member’s self-image (positive or negative) has a direct impact on productivity, and supervisors are responsible for improving productivity within the District. Supervisors must share the responsibility for helping members maintain positive self-images, and by doing so, help the members remain positive, productive, and healthy contributors in the organization.

**Supervisor’s Standards**

Supervision is critical in maintaining the high standards of performance and the positive image of the District within the community and the fire service in general. The supervisor’s style is a determining factor in the overall effectiveness and well-being of the District and our members. All of our supervisors must share their expectations up front with people for whom they are responsible, in a success oriented manner and stress the individual accountability of each member. Those expectations need to be realistic and in concert with the overall expectations and philosophy of the District. It is an inherent responsibility of all Novato Fire District supervisors to develop a capable cadre of members for the future that live and practice the “NFD Way”.

- Supervisors will understand and support the standards established by the District and hold their members accountable.
- Supervisors will not disqualify members who meet District standards but do not meet the supervisor’s personal standards.
- Supervisors will formally request to raise District standards if they appear to be to low rather than imposing their own standards.
- Supervisors will be consistent with their subordinates and themselves and remember someone else is always watching.

All District supervisors must remember that punishment, in and of itself, will not usually modify behavior. If a member must be punished the supervisor must take appropriate action to be positive after the event and help manage and direct the member’s re-entry into the District. This concept and responsibility is very important in the system. If a particular member is going to be retained after a problem has occurred, which is usually the case, there should be a defined process to provide a “way back”, a way to be whole again. This “way back” may be a little different each time, but will usually require not only empathy and acceptance by the leaders and other members of the District, but a behavioral change on the part of the particular member trying to “get back in.”

Supervisors should make the “way back” issue a regular consideration in the problem-solving process, and provide whatever guidance and/or counseling that is required to make this re-entry a success for all concerned, so that the system and the individuals involved can put the situation behind them and go on. Not doing so, may plant “organizational cancers” throughout the District over a period of time. **Remember, friends come and go, but enemies accumulate.** This is also true for organizations. **In most organizations it is common for supervisors to avoid dealing with problem people. This is a poor practice. In fact, supervisors should make a point of spending time with problem people.** A supervisor must supervise people who they don’t like and people who they do like. When dealing with these delicate situations, supervisors should attempt to address the “bottom line” issues to get to the root of the real problems that stand in the way of effective relationships.
A supervisor who attempts to be diagnostic with the work group in order to head-off problems before they occur will find that very few situations will get to the point where formal supervisory action is required.

At times, upper-level supervisors, although striving to be inclusive, may have to dictate an absolute solution to a personnel problem to a lower-level supervisor who is handling the situation. However, occurrences such as this should be kept to a minimum. In most situations, if an absolute course of action is being dictated from above, regardless of the supervisor’s recommendations, the upper-level supervisor should strongly consider handling the situation personally. This helps minimize supervisors appearing to simply be messengers from above, rather than decision makers. Also, these types of decisions are usually most effective when all levels of supervision are kept fully informed.

**Problem Solving**

**It is important to understand that supervisors are paid to solve problems, and when they don’t, problems get exaggerated.** In order for supervisors to consistently solve problems in a positive manner, they must take a very flexible approach to problem solving, keeping the goal of their actions in mind at all times. When dealing with problems involving the behavior or performance of members, the supervisor’s success will many times depend on his/her ability to put the responsibility for the solution back on the member....then help them. It is important that supervisors have excellent listening skills, display empathy when listening and carrying out their duties, avoid being self-righteous when evaluating problems involving the conduct of others. Supervisors are expected to turn negative situations into positive ones whenever possible, keep problems in perspective, and address them at the proper level in the District. Effectively dealing with the negative can create loyalty and commitment from the member in the future.

A good supervisor knows how to approach each of his/her members in a way that will provide a positive change in performance or attitude.

The most effective tools supervisors can use are setting a good example, listening, coaching, counseling, encouraging, nudging, directing, and other supporting actions. In fact, to prevent major problems, regular coaching and counseling are critical. However, a sustained history of unsatisfactory performance by a member must be documented by the supervisor.
Managing Member Performance
Managing Member Performance

Overview

A member’s performance typically comes into question when it becomes apparent that they have caused harm to an individual, member or citizen, damaged District assets, or violated District policy or philosophy.

Some organizations use their authority to punish their members or inflict organizational pain on those who have made a mistake, misbehaved, or are considered to be out of step with the organization. Fortunately, this is not the philosophy of the Novato Fire Protection District.

Punishment is not the principal measure of authority or the desired method to manage member performance issues. Authority is much more dynamic and complex. Authority is the ability to influence a person’s behavior or performance without being punitive.

Our members have feelings, which must be taken into consideration when making decisions relating to managing their performance. If we seriously damage the spirit of a member at any level of the organization, we may never get his/her commitment back.

The amount of respect and trust that our organization is able to gain and sustain from our members is directly proportionate to our ability to understand and balance the issues of authority with compassion and empathy when dealing with member performance issues. Our system must recognize that a member’s performance may not be as easy to revise as a policy. Members should not mistake or misinterpret a compassionate, empathetic approach as weakness on the part of the organization or its supervisors.

Positive behavior and performance should be recognized and rewarded. Unacceptable behavior or performance should never be rewarded or overlooked. A positive approach to managing unacceptable behavior or performance can be a powerful motivating force and is much more powerful than simply guarding the workforce and punishing the perceived non-conformists.

Our members are highly trained, positive, and self-disciplined. However, it is important to remember that they are human beings first and on occasion may deviate from organizational standards, policies, philosophies, or protocols.

Our philosophy of managing member performance is to follow the District Risk Management process to determine the real cause of the deviation through a “Root Cause Analysis”. The intention of the “Root Cause Analysis” is to determine the difference between malicious deviations and those situations when members simply make a mistake or an error in judgment. While the end result of either may be the same, how they are managed is significantly different.

Research has repeatedly proven that unwanted situations within organizations are about 95% related to process problems and only 5% related to personnel problems. Finding the real cause of the problem and dealing with it rather than simply continuing to deal with the symptoms is the basis of the Root Cause Analysis process.
Non-Malicious Deviations from Performance Expectations

There are times when a member may intentionally take a risk which results in damage to District assets or a violation of District policy or philosophy in the course of mitigating an emergency. Intentional deviations that involve calculated risks taken in order to save a life or protect property should not be confused with malicious acts that end with similar results.

Unintentional human error can often be attributed to a lack of recent training, the urgency of the situation, unfamiliarity with a task, low frequency event, or simply a momentary lack of good judgment. These causal and contributing factors are often traced, through a “Root Cause Analysis” to system failures. In cases when members simply make an unintentional mistake, we must focus our attention on correcting the system failure to prevent future similar events rather than punishing the member.

Although the focus may not be on the member, it is not to say that he/she will not be required to complete a documented Training and Performance Improvement Plan and/or EAP Referral depending on the cause(s) identified in the Root Cause Analysis.

If the member has a recent history of deviating from organizational standards, even though unintentional, the appropriate method to manage their performance may be corrective action.

Malicious Deviations from Performance Expectations

Malicious acts are those that are conducted with the intent or potential to harm members of the organization or the public, damage District assets, or violate District policy or philosophy.

When a member maliciously deviates from organizational standards, we generally only need to look as far as the member to determine the Root Cause. While there may be some personal underlying factors, a malicious act calls for the member to accept full responsibility for their performance. In these cases corrective action is generally the most effective and accepted method used to manage a member’s performance, refocus their attention, and to clearly assign responsibility for the act or acts.

Corrective action for malicious acts includes the EAP, prescriptive training, informal and formal discipline. Supervisors are expected to use formal disciplinary action only when absolutely necessary to solve the problem. Formal disciplinary action should only be used for isolated serious violations such as malicious acts and/or situations where the member attempts to cover up the issue or fails to tell the truth.

Formal disciplinary action may also be appropriate for a series of lesser problems in which EAP, prescriptive training, and informal discipline have not been effective. In these cases disciplinary action should still be used in conjunction with these other corrective measures in order to improve performance.

In some situations formal discipline may be forgiven if the member successfully completes a training and performance prescription and has no further similar incidents in pre-determined period of time. In these cases the formal discipline plan will be written into the training and performance prescription will take effect only if the member fails to meet the expectations of the prescription.
Summary

All supervisors are responsible for managing the performance of the members of the organization. They are responsible for enforcing acceptable standards of behavior and work performance within the Novato Fire Protection District and addressing deviations from these standards. When self discipline fails or members make mistakes, intentional or unintentional, malicious or non-malicious, the process of identifying the true cause begins with the District Risk Management Program. The Risk Management Process and Root Cause Analysis will assist the supervisor in differentiating malicious from non-malicious acts and the identification, selection, and implementation of control measures that might alter future risks as well as positively managing the member’s performance.
The Role of the Board of Directors
Board of Directors’ Mission Statement

To care for, protect, and serve the community.

Board of Directors’ Guiding Principles

Individual member attitudes

I represent the needs of all citizens in the community.

I understand that authority is only with the board as a whole, and will work hard to build and sustain an effective governance team.

I understand that manner and behavior make a difference.

I respect the diversity of perspective and styles on the board, among the staff, and in the community.

I understand the roles and responsibilities of the board.

I keep confidential material confidential.

I will follow and understand the District mission, policies, and guidelines.

I work hard and commit the time and energy required to be effective.

Collective attitudes

We focus and remain on-task and consistent

We communicate a common vision

We operate with integrity and trust

We treat everyone with respect and dignity

We govern within board policies, standards, and ethics

We take collective responsibility for the board’s performance

We ensure that the multiple voices of the community inform board deliberations

Board Responsibilities

We set the direction

We establish the structure

We provide the support

We ensure accountability

We act as community leaders
The Role of the Association
The Role of the Association

Most members of the District are also members of The Novato Professional Firefighters Association. It would be impossible to operate the District without the input of the Association to process change, improve programs, procedures, and systems. The Association leadership has a positive approach to improving service and maintaining a safe work environment, and has been one of the keys to the Novato Fire District’s progression to the level of respect that we enjoy in the fire service.

It is important to involve the workforce in the planning of new programs, hiring, purchasing equipment and other operational changes. By doing so, problem areas are discovered early in the process and the parties can proceed toward agreement without the disruption of having to undo something that was hurriedly put into place without appropriate interaction and review. The Association and management may not always agree on every issue. A sign of mature leadership in the Labor/Management relationship has been our ability to agree to disagree on certain issues, while continuing to process and resolve other unrelated issues on which there is agreement.

A good guideline has become, “Process the issues on which there is agreement, and continue to work on the others.” Some things simply take more time and energy than others. What seemed like a bad idea at one point in time, may become a good idea later, and vice versa. Change, our ability to identify the need for it and to adapt to it organizationally and individually, is key to our continued success. Not all changes will work out, but if we are afraid, or unwilling to try new ideas, our organization will fail. This has not been our practice in the past and will not be our practice in the future.

The Organization goals and Association goals are closely aligned to provide for superior customer service to the community. The Association has adopted the following:

**Mission Statement**

*To care for, protect, and serve our members.*

**Guiding Principles**

- We are committed to the protection of our members’ safety and wellbeing.
- We believe that a collaborative process between labor and management will make the Fire District a great place to work.
- We will foster and sustain the trust of our membership and will protect that confidence through our attitude, conduct, communications, and actions.
- We believe that all members are entitled to our best efforts.
- We will strive for excellence in everything we do.
- We will serve our membership with honesty, fairness and integrity.
- We will be sensitive to the diverse and changing needs of our membership.
- We will live the “NFD Way”
Roles and Responsibilities

We will ensure that our members are treated fairly by:

• Negotiating fair and reasonable wages, hours and working conditions
• Monitoring compliance of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Career Development Guidelines
• Supporting and defending our members in adverse actions
• Promote the positive image of the NPFA
• Collaborating with management to make the organization a better place to work
• Supporting the “NFD Way”

We will promote good organizational communication by:

• Utilizing the Chain of Command as a first option to resolve member issues
• Utilizing the informal grievance or a formal grievance as outlined in the Personnel Ordinance when the Chain of Command fails to resolve member issues
• Consistently sharing timely and accurate information with all members

The Association has an Executive Board to administer its primary functions and to interface with Administration. It is important that we each understand these roles and responsibilities.

Roles of the Executive Board

The President

• Establishes overall long and short term goals, objectives and priorities to meet the needs of the membership
• Is the primary spokesperson for Association to the Fire Chief, and members at large.
• Chairs the Executive Board
• Reports to membership on status of major programs
• Signing authority on behalf of the Association for financial and legal purposes
• Represents the organization at District Board of Directors meetings
• Provides leadership and direction to the Association
• Arranges for Vice President to chair meetings in the absence of the President
• Represent the Firefighters Association at community functions
• In conjunction with the Executive Board, sets monthly Association meeting agenda
• Enhances relationships with other community groups and agencies
• In conjunction with the Executive Board provides guidance and leadership
• Ensures Board members receive agenda and minutes in a timely manner
• Appoints all committees of the Novato Professional Firefighter’s Association
• Casts the deciding vote in case of a tie.
The Vice President

- Leads special committees as assigned.
- Assists the President to establish overall long and short term goals, objectives, and priorities for the Association in meeting the needs of the members
- Fulfill Chair position in the absence of the Chairperson, monthly Board meetings
- Be an active member of the Executive Board
- A signing authority on behalf of the Executive Board for financial and legal purposes
- Adhere to general duties outlined in the board member job description

Secretary

- Serves as the Historian for Association documentation
- Assists the President to establish overall long and short term goals, objectives, and priorities
- Serve as a judge of all elections and declare the result.
- Be an active member of the Executive Board
- Prepare and maintain minutes and records for all board meetings
- Reviews/monitors and verifies accuracy of the meetings minutes, and circulates to all members

Treasurer

- Serves as officer on record for the financial transactions of the organization.
- Assists the President to establish overall long and short term goals, objectives, and priorities
- Ability to read/understand/Interpret financial statements for Board members
- Chairs the Finance Committee
- Be an active member of the Executive Board
- Signing authority on behalf of the Board for financial matters
- Ensures audited financial statements are presented to the Board on an annual basis
- Acts as a resource to other committees

Shift Representatives

- Serves as the eyes and ears of the Association on a daily basis.
- Is an shift advisor to all members and offers advice when asked on a variety of Association based issues (MOU and Career Development)
- Assists the President to establish overall long and short term goals, objectives, and priorities
- Recommends policy to the Executive Board
- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the Association through a regular review of programs and services
- Is accountable and seeking nominations for election to the Executive Committee when appropriate
- Prepares for and participate in the discussions and the deliberations of the Executive Board
- Fosters a positive working relationship with other Board members and District staff
- Is aware of and abstains from any conflict of interest
- Recommends members’ use of the chain of command as a first option to resolve issues

Education
Alternative Shift Representatives

- Fills in for Shift Representatives when they are off duty or unable to attend meetings
History of the Fire Service

The career of firefighting dates to the Roman times when Roman Vigiles protected the Romans from the hazards of fire. The American fire service dates to the time of Peter Stuyvesant from New Amsterdam who developed regulations on fire safety in 1647. The first volunteer fire company is credited to Benjamin Franklin who established the Union Fire Company in Philadelphia in 1736.

The original volunteer firefighters were definitely “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” They made themselves a prominent, indispensable, and vital part of the community life by making fire fighting merely one facet of their service.

In as much as a volunteer fire company was a civic responsibility it was also a social club, an energy outlet, and a place where much time was spent. Firefighters regarded their group with prejudiced eyes. They viewed their company with pride as the best in the entire community and their fellow volunteers as the noblest, swiftest, and toughest beings on earth. Their engine was the most beautiful and the most efficient; let anyone who said to the contrary be prepared to prove it!

History of the Novato Fire District

The Novato Fire Volunteer Department was established in June of 1894. The first members of the department were Chief M. Joseph, Assistant Chief W. Hoskins, Engineer Steven Porcella (who owned the blacksmith’s shop) with Hose Number 1 led by Charles Hayden (who lived at the now Hilltop Cafe) and Hose Cart Number 2 led by Acton Haven (his father was a Judge and also served as the Station Agent at the Novato Rail Depot). The department was organized to deal with the businesses and homes that were destroyed by fire and the ever present threat of grass fires that threatened to destroy the small town.

The Novato Advance had an editorial on August 19, 1922 written by Mr. Hanen which stated:

Like most small towns, Novato seems to neglect one essential, and that is good fire protection and a wide-awake fire department. A town is always more or less in danger of fire, and when built of wood is sure to be doomed should a conflagration occur. We have a chemical engine, but whether it is constantly kept in readiness or not we are not prepared to say. There should be plenty of hose, buckets and ladders, and a fire drill once or twice a month is really necessity, so that many can learn how to handle the apparatus and know how and where to obtain it on a minute’s notice. This is a very important matter and should no be longer neglected. One small fire would cause a loss sufficient to equip the town well with fire-fighting apparatus. The time to lock the stable door is before the horse is stolen.

In 1926, long before the incorporation of the City of Novato, the town took the advice of Novato Advance Editor Hanen and formed the Novato Fire Protection District. The District was formed within its current boarders of 75 square miles. The first Commissioners of the new Fire District were William Cole, Louis Nave, and Walter Busher, Sr. In 1930 they authorized the construction of the main station at 1000 Grant Ave. at the northwest corner of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard. The first Chief of the Fire Protection District was Charles Kiser.
Today the Novato Fire Protection District still maintains small cadre of volunteers who continue to serve their community much like the Novato Fire Department Volunteers of 1894. Since its formation the Novato Fire Protection District has become a unique organization, not just within the fire service, but compared to most organizations - public or private.

**Novato Fire Protection District Timeline**

Founded: 1926
First Fire Commissioners: W.E. Cole, L. Nave, & W. Busher
First Fire Chief: Chas Kiser

Current area protected: 71 square miles
Population (Est.): 60,000
Personnel: 83 total (9 Staff, 5 Clerical, and 69 Firefighters). There are also 9 volunteers.
Equipment: 32 Units

1926 Marin County Board of Supervisors grant Township to Novato. Novato officially becomes a Fire District.


1927 In June, Chief Chas Kiser resigned after 6 months. In July, the second Fire Chief was appointed: Joseph A. Stutt. First official fire hydrant installed at a cost of $2.00 per month. First official Fire Log started.

1928 In October M (E.T.) Tracey was hired as a caretaker for the engine and equipment. He was paid $15.00 a month.

1930 First Fire Station built on land purchased from O.A. Anderson. This was located on Grant & Redwood (Highway 101).


1933 Chief Charles Olson is hired to replace Joseph A. Stutt who became a Fire Commissioner.

1939 Chief Olson hires Fred Miller as first official paid Firefighter.

1948 Chief Olson retires after 12 years and Chief Fred Miller is appointed as Chief.

1952 Chief Miller resigns for health reasons. In September of 1952 a young energetic & motivated George Cavallero takes over as the District’s 5th Fire Chief.

1966 Station 3 is built at San Marin Drive and San Ramon

1969 Chief George Cavallero dies in the line of duty while responding to a structure fire.
1969 In February, Assistant Chief Jack Kidder is appointed to Chief following the death of Chief George Cavallero.

1974 On June 6th, Measure K (Life Safety Program) was written by Commissioners Ray Landi, Bill Boyle & Richard W. Price and placed on the ballot. This would increase funding for Station 4, ambulances and personnel.

1975 Chief Jack Kidder resigns and Charles Onorato is appointed as the District’s seventh Fire Chief.

1976 Station 4 is built in Ignacio

1980 Chief Onorato resigns with a disability. Assistant Chief James Berthinier, with 20 years of experience in the District is appointed as the Districts 8th Fire Chief.

1980 Measure E (Paramedic Tax) passed in November.

1988 Fire Station 1 is built on Redwood Boulevard

1991 Fire Station 2 is built on Atherton Avenue

1995 In May, James Berthinier retires after 15 years as Chief and 35 years in the Novato Fire District.

1995 In June, John Rentz is appointed as the Districts 9th Fire Chief.

1999 In September John Rentz retires.

1999 In October Jeff Meston become the Novato Fire District 10th Fire Chief and the only Chief to serve in both the 20th Century and 21st Century

2003 The District begins building its fifth fire station in the Hamilton area and acquires an Administrative Building on Rowland Way. Engineer Steven Rucker dies in the line of duty on October 29 during the Cedar Fire in Southern California

2004 The District opens Station 5 and dedicates the Novato Fire Fallen Firefighter Memorial at its new Administration building.

First Fire Engine

The District’s first mobile piece of fire equipment, pictured on the History chapter page, was a 1923 Ford Model T, now restored and displayed at Fireman’s Fund Insurance Company headquarters. The truck was originally outfitted with a chemical tank when purchased by the citizens of Novato.

In 1927, the chemical tanks were removed and replaced with a 160 gallon water tank along with a small fire pump. The conversion was done by a local blacksmith. The Model T was in service in Novato until 1939 when it was replaced with a 1938 Dodge Power Wagon. The Model T was sold to a dairy in Sonoma County. It was later sold to Bob Crandel of Sonoma County, whose father was one of the Volunteers in 1933.

Mr. Crandel kept the Model T until 1976 and then sold it to a Novato Firefighter, Gene Fox. It was then purchased and restored by Fireman’s Fund where it now resides. The Model T is often showcased at parades and fairs.

Encourage
As a member of our organization, choose to make every day you come to work a great day by choosing to have a positive attitude. Your team members, customers, and you will be thankful.

Find ways to have fun and celebrate your accomplishments and the accomplishments of others.

Be serious about your work without being overly serious about yourself.

Stay focused in order to be present when the community and your team need you.

You now know the “Novato Fire District Way.”

Make a commitment to live it!