# North Kingstown Fire Department

| Standard Operating Guidelines | | 2000 Series |
|---|---|---|
| Effective Date: | Hazing / Bullying | Human Resources |
| 04/2021 | | 2060 |
| Revision Date: | | |
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## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to prohibit workplace and work-related hazing and bullying. Workplace and work-related hazing and bullying may cause the loss of trained and talented employees, reduce productivity and morale, and create unnecessary legal risks for the North Kingstown Fire Department (Department). This policy also prohibits pranks that violate laws, department rules, regulations, or policies.

## II. DEFINITIONS

**Hazing:** Ritualized harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group.
**Bullying:** Repetitive acts of aggressive behavior that intentionally threaten, humiliate, intimidate, degrade, or hurt, physically or mentally, another person. Bullying usually involves repeated acts committed by a person or group who has, or is perceived as having, more power than the victim/target of the bullying.
**Prank:** A mischievous trick or practical joke.

## III. POLICY

A. The North Kingstown Fire Department (Department) seeks to promote a safe environment where employees may function without compromise to their health, safety, and welfare. It is, therefore, the Department's policy that hazing and bullying is prohibited. Hazing or bullying of members is unacceptable and will not be tolerated for any reason. All personnel should be able to work in an environment free of hazing and bullying. The department further does not tolerate work-related pranks that may violate any law or department rule, regulation or policy.

B. It is the responsibility of every member of the Department to support the prevention of hazing and bullying. Officers as well as each individual firefighter must accept the personal obligation to uphold the basic values of being just, civil, and respectful of the rights of others.

C. Nothing in this policy is intended to curtail or limit activities associated with fostering team building activities intended to increase job performance, effectiveness, and crew continuity.

## IV. PROCEDURE

A. Department personnel shall not engage in hazing and bullying other members of the department at any time regardless of the members' willingness to participate or submit to the conduct.

B. Fire department personnel shall not participate in any prank that violates a law or violates any department rule, regulation, or policy. Specifically, fire department personnel shall not engage in any activity, whether intended as a prank or otherwise, that:
   1. Interferes with or delays response or readiness for response
   2. Places any member or civilian at risk of injury or harm
   3. Risks or causes any property damage to department or privately owned property
   4. Disables any apparatus, equipment, safety equipment, or PPE.

C. Officers shall ensure that personnel are not bullied or hazed, and that personnel do not engage in bullying, hazing, or pranks that violate the law or Department policy. Officers have an affirmative obligation to intervene and stop any bullying, hazing, or pranks

D. Officers who fail to intervene may be subject to discipline.

## V. BULLYING and HAZING

A. The following acts are examples of the kind of behavior that if repeated and committed under circumstances of a power imbalance, constitutes bullying and/or hazing:
   1. Physical violence, hitting, striking, punching, slapping, shoving, tripping, and other acts that hurt people physically, or otherwise result in inappropriately touching
   2. Spreading rumors intended to humiliate, embarrass, degrade, or intimidate another
   3. Teasing, taunting, harassing, isolating, or excluding another
   4. Name calling, verbal abuse, threats, or coercion
   5. Encouraging others to engage in similar activities intended to humiliate, embarrass, degrade, or intimidate another
   6. Engaging in any of the above using telephones, cellphones, emails, text messages, instant messages, online, electronically, or using cyber technology. This can include:
      a. Sending offensive or threatening text, email, or instant messages
      b. Posting offensive, humiliating pictures or messages about others in blogs or on Web sites
      c. Using someone else's username to spread rumors or lies about someone

## VI. REPORTING PROCEDURE

A. Members who believe they are being bullied or hazed should immediately ask the member or members to stop.

B. If the bullying and/or hazing does not stop the member shall report such activity to his or her supervisor.

C. If the immediate supervisor is involved in the allegation and/or the member is uncomfortable with making a report to their immediate supervisor, the member *may* by-pass the chain of

command in order to report this activity to any ranking officer, up to and including the Fire Chief.

D. All reports of workplace bullying and hazing will be treated seriously and investigated promptly and impartially.