



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

FILE NO: 17-001
DATE: January 3, 2017
TO: All Personnel
FROM: Brian Fennessy, Fire Chief
SUBJECT: Mission-Driven Culture Initiative - Update

It is the intent of this first Office-of-the-Chief of the year (2017) to share with you an update on our Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) initiative. Considerable planning and discussion has taken place over the past several months in preparation of our kicking off the phased MDC implementation.

As a reminder, the purpose of this initiative is to instill within this department a core set of operational values and supporting doctrine that will enable our firefighters, lifeguards and non-uniformed staff in being more adaptive and effective when executing their assigned missions. It will also prepare us for the unexpected situations and problems we have yet to experience.

It is important to remember that the sole purpose of Mission-Driven Culture and its intent based planning and command system – and the specific tool of leader’s intent – is to lower risk to the operators and the organization, and to increase the chances of success. Simply put, lowering the odds of bad things happening and increasing the opportunity of good things happening. All other benefits, while significant to the organization, are secondary to that core purpose.

As the process of cultural change and operational culture is an extension of the executive leader’s vision, the initiative will be owned by the Executive Command Staff (ECS). As the owners of the MDC initiative, this group has collectively agreed on the implementation priorities and strategies so that as a group we demonstrate unity of command.

To that end, my leader’s intent is as follows:

Task:

On January 17, 2017 Mission-Centered Solutions (MCS) will facilitate a one-day planning session with the SDFD Executive Command Staff (ECS) to prioritize and coordinate Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) initiative activities.

Purpose:

- Deepen understanding of the initiative with the executive leadership levels of the department and increase understanding of leader responsibilities in the implementation of the effort.

- Provide tools and establish expectations with regard to implementation at the executive levels.
- Build a commonly-understood plan for rolling out the initiative's activities and messages with specific attention to executive leadership messaging and behaviors.
- Establish priorities and timing for initiative supporting activities.

End state:

An implementation plan is developed that provides a mutually-agreed upon course of action for the department. Within that plan, executive leaders understand their roles and responsibilities with supporting and educating others about the initiative.

In addition to the above leader's intent, several department focus groups (all ranks/classifications) will be established by mid-February. Their mission will be to define how this operational culture should look and feel at each level of our organization. This work will inform our operational and leadership doctrines, which will guide the actions and thinking of our people over time and distance. Properly aligning this operational culture to our mission will be paramount for our organization's long-term success.

The world is changing faster than ever, and the smartest response for those of us in charge is to give small teams the freedom to experiment while driving everyone to share what they learn across the entire organization. I believe that this initiative will enable us to adapt to these changes as needed, while preserving the core of who we are; our people, values and the mission of our department.

This in turn can develop the ability to share context so that the teams can decentralize and empower individuals to act. Decisions are pushed downward, allowing the members to act quickly. This new approach also requires changing the traditional conception of the leader. The role of the leader becomes creating the broader environment instead of command-and-control micromanaging.

Combining the agility, adaptability, and cohesion of small teams with the power and resources of a large organization is a force multiplier. The quality of our cohesion, adaptiveness, and resilience is chiefly determined by strength of our culture. The Mission-Driven Culture is an articulation of this operational vision or end state.

Developing a common belief system and supporting doctrine that advances concentric attitudes and behavior will require a long-term commitment and substantial focus by all members of the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. Over the next few months I will be working with the Executive Command Staff to lay the ground work for this evolution to begin in earnest.