



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

FILE NO.: 20-019
DATE: June 30, 2020
TO: All Personnel
FROM: Colin Stowell, Fire Chief
SUBJECT: Respect in the Workplace

I'm sure we would all agree that 2020 will forever be remembered as one of the most challenging and stressful years our department, and certainly our members and their families have faced. The culmination of a pandemic, civil unrest and demonstrations, economic uncertainty, and political divide continues to test our mental and physical resilience. And as we try to absorb and interpret current events every day in the news, it's only human to expect we will have personal reactions and our own unique perspectives to the circumstances leading up to this point and beliefs as to what should follow.

While having our opinions and being free to express them is a fundamental right we all enjoy, it's essential for us to remember the workplace is an equally shared environment that shall remain free from any hostility or disparaging comments which might make coworkers uncomfortable. Our workforce is comprised of not only individuals of different race, ethnicity, religion and political viewpoints, but also of diverse cultures and life experiences that bring so much value to the organization and our profession. Although verbal comments about opinions or impressions related to current events and public issues may be individual in nature and not intended to offend anyone, we need to be cognizant of others around us and understand those comments may not always be welcome and can be hurtful. Without knowing the background and cultural experiences of those we work with or who are within earshot, comments and discussion on sensitive and contentious issues may be interpreted as insulting, offensive or even threatening to someone who doesn't share the same perspective. Appreciating that we all want to show respect and acceptance of others in a harmonious workplace, it's critical that we remain mindful of those around us who might not necessarily share our viewpoint or stance on an issue.

These tough times our society is facing will continue to challenge our resilience as an organization and us as individuals. The strength of the department relies tremendously on the cohesiveness of our workforce and the mutual respect we all deserve. I am asking and expect that every San Diego Fire-Rescue Department member do our part to maintain that cohesiveness, remain sensitive to others in the workplace who might not share your perspective, and refrain from even unintentionally disrupting that dignified bond and harmony we so proudly embrace.