

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a guide to organize participation in a volunteer Chaplain Program. This policy should serve as a guide and resource availability list for departments within San Diego County. It is not intended to replace individual agencies policies. The development of agency specific Chaplain Program policy is advised.

Policy:

Objectives

1. To provide support for the emotional care and faith needs for sworn and non-sworn personnel within Fire Department services regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, creed, or religion
2. To provide critical incident stress management support to assist individuals in coping with inordinate levels of stress they may encounter related to emergency responses. This support is provided in an effort to mitigate negative pressures, which can produce disintegrating tendencies and adversely affect an employee's effectiveness on the job as well as at home
3. To provide incident scene chaplain services to members of the community who have experienced a traumatic event in support of the emergency response services
4. To provide chaplain services at department functions, retirement dinners, various meetings, recruit graduations, weddings, funerals, etc.
5. To develop relationships with Fire Department personnel and their families, for the purpose of being a resource for support for future times of need
6. The program will not be used as a forum for proselytizing (recruitment to a new faith) and is not meant to replace an individual's clergy and/or other counseling programs available through the Fire Department. Chaplains do not represent a particular denomination or faith group, but serve to care for the emotional and faith needs of the firefighter. This may include referrals to varying faith groups as requested by the assisted personnel. The chaplain service does not exist to compete with, but rather to complement these existing resources. In addition, all chaplain services are rendered free of charge as the chaplains serve the department as volunteers

Appointment

The fire chief or his/her designee shall evaluate any prospective vetted candidate for a Fire Department chaplain position.

1. Appointment Process

Because of the major risks and constant stresses faced by Fire Department personnel in the line-of-duty, chaplains will be appointed to function within the Fire Department to assist personnel needs.

- a. The chaplain will be appointed by written order of the department fire chief
- b. The chaplain service falls under a designated oversight within the department served
- c. If more than one chaplain in a department, a chaplaincy team leader will be established
- d. The chaplain team leader coordinates the day-to-day operation of the chaplains
- e. The number of chaplains will be determined by the department served
- f. The chaplain will also serve the department's professional civilian staff and Emergency Communications
- g. Candidates must be from a recognized religious authority "IRS recognized religious organization" to function as an emergency services chaplain

General Guidelines

1. Any communications a person makes to the chaplain is on a strictly confidential basis and will not be released to department members or any other person except where required by law
2. If the Fire Department requires a reporting system, the information that is shared shall not be specific enough that can be tracked back to the fire personnel seeking assistance
3. Any fire personnel may go the chaplain without having to notify his or her supervisor or anyone else
4. Any fire department officer or member (including administrative staff) who is made aware of any situation which may need the response of the chaplain may contact the chaplain directly
5. The chaplain may also be contacted through fire department administration if desirable

6. The chaplain team leader will keep current telephone numbers for the chaplains and ensure they are posted in all facilities

Program Management

1. The chaplain program is accountable to and overseen by a designated department lead

Chaplain Team Leader (If multiple chaplains are enlisted by a department)

1. The chaplain team leader is one of the chaplains who is selected within the Fire Department appointed lead. The team leader shall remain in the position until such time that they express the desire to step down
2. The support chaplains shall report to the chaplain team leader
3. The chaplain team leader will be responsible for matters pertaining to the operations of the chaplain services
4. Chaplain Team Leader duties include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Meet all Fire Department chaplains on a regular basis
 - b. Provides instruction of new chaplains to include overview of the Chaplain Program, Fire Department culture and terminology, introduction to senior staff and an invitation to attend approved functions.
 - c. Maintain updated chaplain roster active for Fire Department services

Options for Equipment/Information Provided at Appointment

This list serves as a guide for options within a department)

1. Fire Department Chaplain polo shirt
2. Brush jacket
3. Business cards/identification card
4. Wallet badge
5. Package of information on Chaplain Program to include:
 - a. Fire Department Chaplain Program Policy
 - b. Name and phone number of oversight officer
 - c. List of fire stations/locations/battalions
6. Class B uniform following one year of satisfactory service

- a. Class A uniform - Based on funding and need for official ceremonies
- 7. The badge and collar insignia should be:
 - a. Badge center insignia should be department or city emblem
 - b. Collar insignia should represent denomination and be identified with input from the Chaplain

Qualifications, Training, and Commitments

To ensure that any chaplain associated with the Fire Department served meets appropriate qualifications and is willing to make the desired commitment, the following standards must be met. These qualifications, training standards and commitment levels are guidelines and are subject to change at the discretion of the fire chief

- 1. Proof of Certification:
 - a. Ordination, licensure, investiture, or commission by a recognized religious authority
 - b. Certification by ACPE, APC, NACC, ICPC, FFC, or other recognized chaplaincy authorizing institution
 - c. Member of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and/or the Federation of Fire Chaplains
- 2. Education and Training:
 - a. Theological education or training consistent with the requirements for the specific faith traditions within a denomination or religion
 - b. Ecclesiastical certification that a candidate is in good standing; an endorsement for Fire Department chaplaincy by a recognized religious body; and approximately three years of experience in ministry
 - c. Current involvement in a ministry, congregation or church-related organization in San Diego County
 - d. Possession of a valid California ID, a US Citizen
 - e. Completed 40 hours of documented professional crisis and chaplaincy training in the following categories:
 - i. Basic Crisis Intervention courses
 - ii. Appropriate Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) courses
 - iii. Appropriate chaplaincy training courses
 - iv. Peer Support courses

- f. Experience:
 - i. Experience in crisis intervention services and CISM applications
 - ii. Knowledge and experience of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - iii. Experience and understanding of the dynamics of grief and bereavement
 - iv. Experience in conducting weddings and memorials

Selection Process

1. Each Fire Department chaplain candidate must complete a department's volunteer application
2. A successful background investigation will be completed for each chaplain candidate
3. Following successful completion of a background check, the applications are reviewed by the interview panel and chaplain coordinator
4. Following successful completion of a background check, the applications are reviewed by the interview panel and/or chaplain coordinator
5. The panel or coordinator will bring recommendations to the oversight officer for final approval
6. Approved chaplains will receive a list of contact information for their battalion chiefs and station phone numbers for ride-along purposes
7. Uniform and equipment will be issued upon approval

Fire Department Chaplain Requirements

1. Attendance at regular chaplaincy meetings. Locations of the meetings may rotate throughout the battalions or training facilities
2. Maintain regular accountable communication with the Fire Department chaplain team leader
3. Willing to work in coordination with Fire Department leadership requests
4. Fire Department chaplains are required to participate in annual continuing education, applicable to peer support, chaplaincy, or crisis intervention
5. Able to make a minimum commitment of three years serving as a fire department chaplain
6. Minimum of two fire stations visits or ride-alongs per month

- a. Visits and ride-alongs should be scheduled through the station captain with approval from the battalion chief, lieutenant or supervisor
 - b. Upon arrival: Chaplains are to introduce themselves to everyone at the station and provide your intended length of stay
 - c. Chaplains will cover the cost of their personal meals when on a ride along
 - d. Ask about the captain's preference for direction of their personal location when coming to a scene (i.e. stay in the rig, stay with the engineer, stand to the side, etc.)
 - e. Ask questions of the firefighters and LISTEN. Take mental or confidential notes when conversations warrant a follow-up
 - f. Do NOT make judgments about other firefighters, captains or command staff
 - g. Tell the crew to follow their normal routine and not to feel that they have to entertain the chaplain ride along
7. Provide physical, emotional and spiritual care to members of Fire Department and their families
 8. Maintain "around-the-clock" availability and accessibility as much as possible within other career demands
 9. Willing to respond to incidents as requested through Fire Department established communication system
 10. Assist department needs for pre-incident and Fire Academy CISM instruction as requested
 11. Willing to serve individual and department personnel needs as requested for crisis intervention, ceremonies, and various other related functions
 12. Respond in a supportive manner to large-scale incidents (e.g. second/third alarm fires, etc.) as available
 13. Chaplains are to maintain a consistent professional image at all times on or off duty
 14. Dress appropriate to the requirements of the department protocol. Chaplains should wear approved chaplain uniform at drills and ride-a-longs

Chaplain Services

1. Invocations, benedictions, special presentations, etc. for official ceremonies
2. Visiting sick or injured Fire Department employees

3. Providing care during bereavement situations
4. Providing pre-incident instruction in relation to stress management intervention strategies
5. Providing coping assistance for personnel following stressful career experiences
6. Offering services to families within the department such as weddings, funerals, religious events and ceremonies
7. Helping with peer support functions
8. Providing personal, marital and family chaplaincy counseling assistance
9. Providing chaplaincy support to victims of a work-related crisis

Critical Incident Stress Management

The chaplains associated with Fire Department will play an integral role in critical incident stress management, the International Association of Firefighters Behavioral Health, or psychological first-aid services.

Employee Assistance

Case studies of major incidents where numerous injuries or fatalities occurred have revealed that significant numbers of emergency personnel experienced some form of stress-related symptoms following the incident. Many of these symptoms were transitory and most personnel had no long-term detrimental effects. These studies, however, also revealed that a small percentage of personnel do experience some form of long-term detrimental effects resulting from exposure to such incidents. Some of these effects have been delayed, surfacing later after a period of no apparent symptoms. Without professional intervention, these personnel have experienced declining work performance and deterioration of family relationships, as well as increased health problems.

1. Types of incidents that may warrant chaplaincy assistance:
 - a. Line-of-duty death of a Fire Department employee
 - b. Serious line-of-duty injury or illness of an employee
 - c. Suicide of a Fire Department employee
 - d. Multi-casualty incident/disaster
 - e. Significant event involving children
 - f. Significant event with which a Fire Department employee identifies closely

- g. Personnel placed in extreme danger, e.g., hostage, assaults, etc.
- h. Prolonged incident with loss
- i. Excessive media interest
- j. Any incident where Fire Department leadership and/or personnel feel an individual may benefit from intervention

Community Assistance

Community trauma can evoke a wide range of highly charged responses from both disaster victims or the emergency responders who are dispatched to provide care and support. The goal of the chaplain's service would be to ensure that affected individuals are assisted in coping with the challenges and stress they experience through a disaster as requested by the Fire Department leadership. As such, Fire Department chaplains can provide crisis intervention services to assist in the mitigation of the potentially harmful impact of a disaster. Within the arena of community service, chaplains exercise their care through a religiously neutral ethic and within the legal government boundaries.

1. For community disasters the chaplain services may include:
 - a. Supplying on-scene assistance in mitigating the stress reactions of affected community members as appropriately requested by Fire Department leadership
 - b. Assisting affected families by offering referrals of community support networks
 - c. Serving as liaisons with other helping agencies called to assist in a disaster
 - d. Providing assistance upon request, with any community ecumenical services that are in association with a crisis where the Fire Department is involved