Consideration

Discretion

Acceptance

Unity

# INTERNAL RELATIONS VISION

The way we treat each other, within our department, has a direct impact on the way we treat other people. It is our vision that Mesa Fire Department members will treat each individual with fairness and respect. Relationships based on fairness and respect promote high job satisfaction, which enhances internal and external customer service.

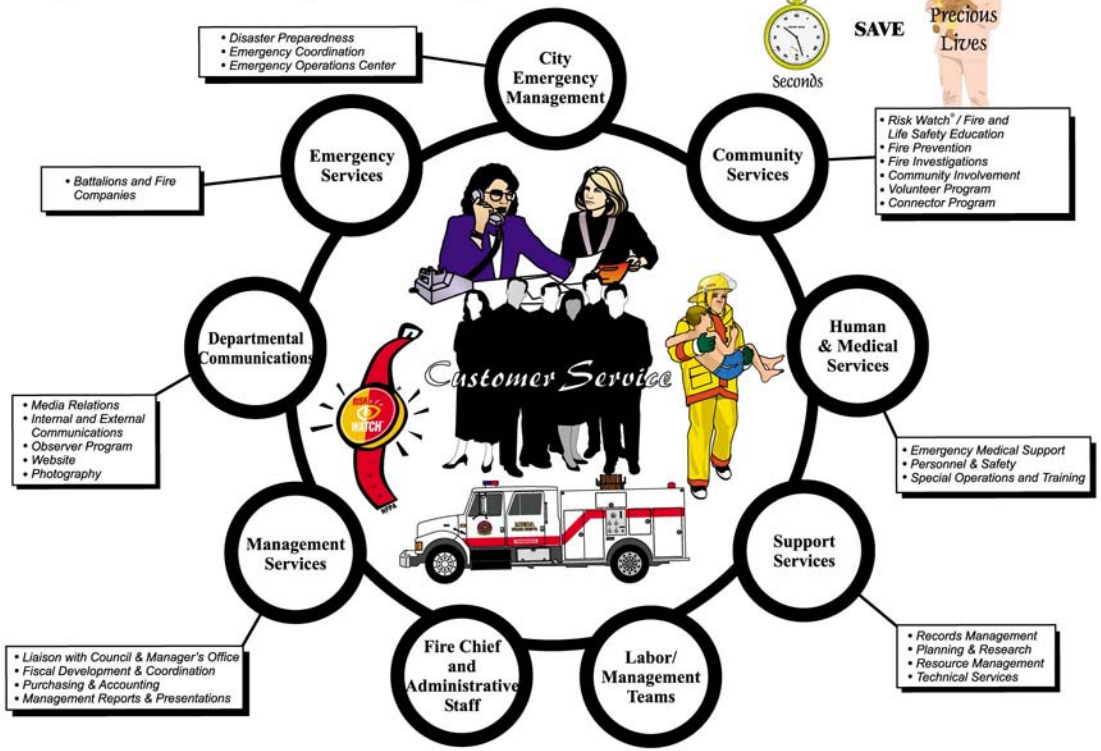
*You see things*
*and you say,*
*"Why?",*
*but I dream things*
*that never were*
*and I say,*
*"Why not?"*

-George Bernard Shaw

# DEDICATION

This guide is dedicated to all the men and women of the Mesa Fire Department who make the organization a great place to work. As depicted by Chief Compton's stool below, each member plays an integral part in fulfilling the department's mission. It is through the hard work and dedication of our members, past and present, that the department has been successful. The caring attitude and the professionalism exhibited by members reflects our dedication to the continued success of the organization. This is the reason why we continue to forge ahead, looking forward to the future of the Mesa Fire Department.

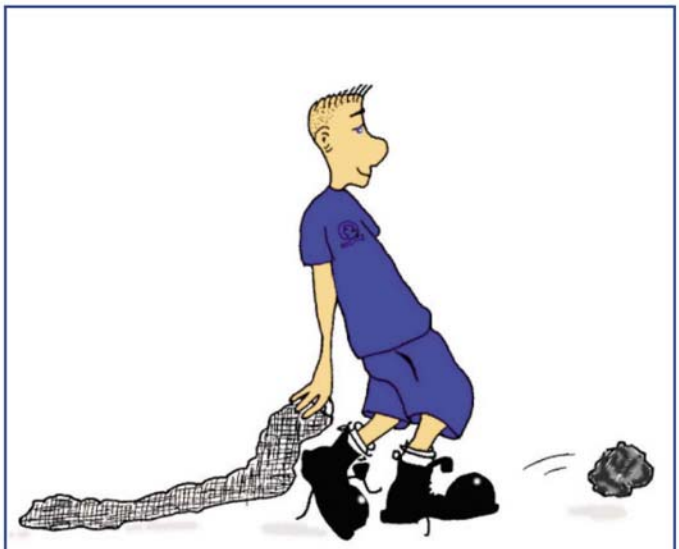
# City of Mesa Fire Department Operational Structure



# INTRODUCTION

Internal Relations is the way we interact with and treat each other on a day-to-day basis in every area of the Fire Department. It is one of the most challenging organizational issues and it can be difficult to measure. However, the affect of internal relations on morale, service, and productivity is significant.

Addressing the numerous concepts of internal relations is not an easy task. As in every organization, there are key concepts and behaviors, that when adhered to, will build and enhance internal relationships. In this document, we identify and address some of these concepts. They are not listed in any specific order nor by their importance.



Have you ever noticed that when you are hurt, it's just like being hit by a rock?

Our objective, as a department, is to dedicate ourselves to being considerate of each other's feelings, discreet about the things we say and do, valuing and accepting the diversity among us, and placing a premium on the unity within our organization.

***...the affect of internal relations on morale, service, and productivity is significant.***

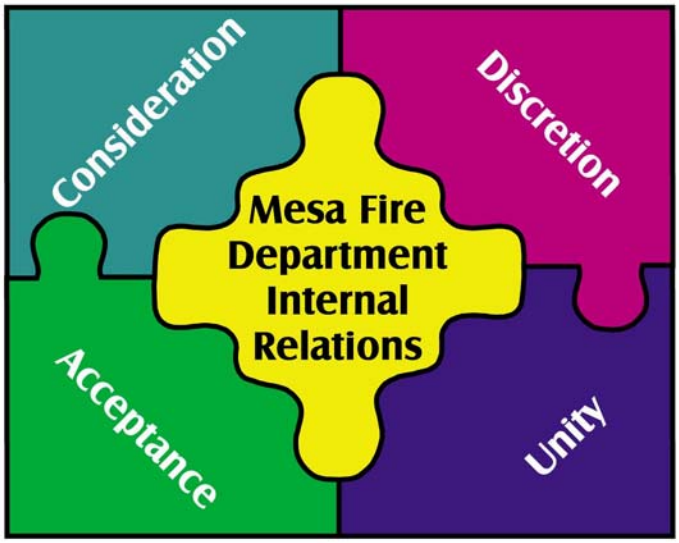
Some would say that a more politically correct direction should have been taken, using this opportunity to educate people on diversity and the issue of bias. Others might say that our organization is doing just fine in internal relations and nothing else is needed. We suggest that somewhere in the middle is the most appropriate.

It is our hope that this guide is used as a compass to help point our department in a positive direction and help us capture the essence of a continuous and progressive journey toward maintaining a positive, productive, and healthy work environment.

*"Let us become the change we seek in the world."*

- Mahatma Gandhi

# INTERNAL RELATIONS KEY BEHAVIORS



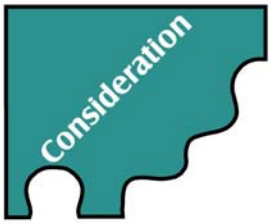

**When Interacting with others:**

- Show consideration for each other in everything we do.
- Use discretion when dealing with sensitive or personal matters.
- Be accepting of each other as individuals.
- Display unity by working together as members of the team.

*"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; That is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them"*

–Henry David Thoreau

**Consideration** is practiced when members think about the impact their actions may have, before they act. This careful thought process involves listening, being empathetic, compassionate, and giving thoughtful attention to the way we interact with and react to each other. Using this "careful thought process" will enhance our ability to understand each other, as well as enable each member to act and treat other members with consideration. This includes behaviors and concepts such as:




- Empathy
- Compassion
- Understanding by seeking clarity
- Giving careful thought to the impact of our words and actions on others
- Mindful concern for others
- Praise in a way that is meaningful to the individual

People often pick up and carry these rocks as a reminder of what happened to them.

**Discretion** is practiced when members make decisions and deal with everyday interpersonal situations in a manner that builds trust throughout the organization. We must consider the effect of what we say and do before we talk or act. This includes behaviors and concepts such as:

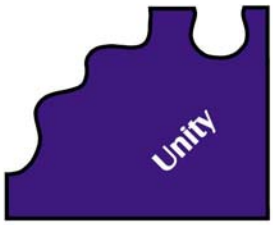
- Honoring confidentiality
- Showing sound judgement
- Disciplining in private
- Avoiding automatic or compulsory action
- Building trust
- Not jumping to conclusions
- Avoiding remarks or actions that might be hurtful to others

**Acceptance** is practiced when members are open to receiving the opinions of another, even if he/she doesn't share the same viewpoint. Ideally, members will seek to understand each other by listening to the view of the other member. It is important to be open and to accept each member's right to be a unique individual, with a frame of reference that is "true" for them. This includes behaviors and concepts such as:

- Listening to others' opinions with an open mind
- Being understanding
- Having a non-judgmental attitude
- Including others
- Participating in and encouraging two-way communication
- Responding with respect
- Seeking to understand others' perspective
- Accepting each individual's right to a personal belief structure

**Unity** is practiced when members are dedicated to working toward the common goal of the department. The Fire Department is strengthened by a system of parts joining together in a state of accord, thus creating a unified team. This includes behaviors and concepts such as:

- Togetherness in good and difficult times
- Wholeness by joining a system of parts
- Loyalty to the group
- Seek and use individual strengths
- Cohesiveness




*"A house divided against itself cannot stand."*

- Abraham Lincoln

People may even toss rocks at others as a way to pay back the hurt...

# PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Each of us is defined by our action or inaction. We define what is acceptable not only by what we do, but by what we tolerate being done in our presence. If you see or hear inappropriate comments or behavior, and do nothing, it can be interpreted as condoning or accepting the comment or behavior and perhaps even validating it. It is our collective obligation to ourselves, each other, and the department to make sure that our action and inaction are reflective of positive internal relationships.

*"It is not what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."*

- Moliere, actor & playwright (1622-1673)

*If it is to be, it is up to me.*

- Unknown

## What can each member do?

- Define, in your own mind, what is fair and respectful.
- Talk with each other about the effect of words and actions.
- Address issues as they occur.
- Be willing to give and receive "gentle criticism" concerning internal interactions.
- Make adjustments as necessary.

*"Treat people as though they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being."*

**- Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe**

# LEADERSHIP

We are all leaders, formal and/or informal, regardless of our respective professional roles. The impact of our leadership can be significant to other members and the organization as a whole. We each provide a vision of positive internal relations by accepting personal accountability for the example we project.

Regardless of individual roles within the organization, there are also department standards and expectations we must each uphold. Supervisors, by virtue of their assignment, have a responsibility to model and manage in a way that is consistent with these expectations. Whether addressing individual or department expectations, we lead by the example we set.

*"Behavior is governed by Values; Consequences are governed by Principles; Therefore, Value Principles"*
-Unknown

# TRUST

Trust, on a personal and/or professional level, is an integral part of each member's commitment to our department's internal relations. Historically, the trust bestowed upon us by the public is based on the nature of the services we provide and the manner in which we provide them. In order to earn and maintain trust, we as individuals, should perform consistently in a positive, productive, and effective manner. Each individual, being one part of the department as a whole, is a reflection of the overall image of the Mesa Fire Department. Internal trust promotes optimal performance by our members, which in turn increases external trust for us as a department.

Over time, the weight of the rocks can take its toll. People make it worse by taking rocks out of their bag to re-live what had happened in the past...

*"The influence of each human being on others in this life is a kind of immortality."*

**- John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the U.S. (1767-1848)**

# FAIRNESS & RESPECT

Each member of the Mesa Fire Department has the potential to impact others and to go about his or her work in a positive manner. Although the choice is a personal one, a positive attitude will increase job satisfaction, team productivity, and the quality of customer service.

A key to maintaining positive internal relationships is to accept that all members have a basic need and right to be treated with fairness and respect.

*"...tact is*
*rubbing out another's mistakes*
*instead of rubbing them in."*

Unknown

# HOSTILITY

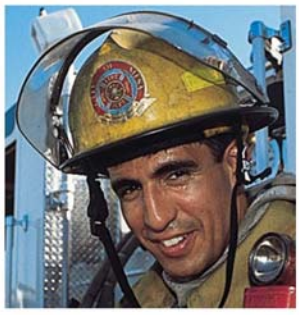
Within the context of acceptable behavior and performance, all members have the right to be treated with respect and should be accepted for the values and differences they bring to the workforce. Regardless of rank or title, sworn or civilian, experienced or novice, all members of the Mesa Fire Department should be treated with personal respect and professionalism.

Our workplace must be free of hostility. The lack of common courtesy, intentionally excluding an individual from group participation or negative verbal/nonverbal communication are examples of what may be perceived as hostile.

Hostility, whether real or perceived, subtle or overt, is simply not acceptable in the organization.

We may see people all around us carrying a heavy load as is evident by their appearance, outlook, and attitude...

***What can YOU do to make everyone feel like part of the team?***



# HUMOR

Humor is a natural and important element of communication. It is an essential element of our lives, including in the work environment, but should not be accomplished at the expense of others.

Positive internal relations encourages the use of humor in the workplace without restricting personal expression. When used appropriately, and with consideration for others, humor creates an enjoyable environment. When using humor, we should always be respectful, be aware of the feelings of others, and use common sense. Inappropriate humor can be hurtful and perceived as hostile. What may be funny to one, may not be funny to another. Being unaware of how others may perceive a situation could lead to unintentional hurtful comments, literature, or illustrations. Showing respect for others will lessen the chance of humor becoming hurtful.

## What can we do about the quality of our humor?

- If you are the one using humor, be sure it is used with good intent and shows consideration for all parties involved.
- If you are the one who perceives the humor as offensive, address it promptly.
- Through positive communication, hurtful humor can be avoided and unity in the workplace enhanced.
- Our personal responsibility is to appropriately react when humor directed toward ourselves or others is perceived as inappropriate.

*"We strengthen and build by pointing out the good traits of a person and cause fear and weakness by being unduly critical."*

**Unknown**

Sometimes the weight can paralyze people... all the time reminding them of the things that have hurt. What a waste of life, time, and effort! A life could be better used helping each other, not living in the past and hurting each other...

# FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION

When children make mistakes, it is often used as an opportunity to assist the child in learning an important lesson. What if we took the same attitude with coworkers? Easily forgive their mistakes and make every effort to reconcile and learn from it.

Why Forgiveness . . . The more people forgive, the more capable they are of forgiving. We know it is a personal choice to forgive someone for hurting us. It should be understood that until we forgive, we tend to avoid the person who hurt us, seek revenge, or worse, stop working with that person altogether. By making an effort to forgive others, we can reduce hostility in the workplace.

Why Reconciliation . . . Reconciliation is seeking forgiveness, being understanding of other people and doing what it takes to improve a working relationship or resolve an issue. If you take everything personally, it can quickly lead to blaming others.

It's not just about forgiving others; it's about forgiving yourself, too.

All of us are inclined to carry a bag of rocks, but we need to dump it from time to time. Use the lessons learned to get rid of the rocks. Learn to communicate with each other, understand each others' perspective, and work together so we don't get caught up in our pasts. There are no futuristic rocks...they've already happened...we must learn from them and go on.

***(Adapted from a presentation by Fire Chief Dennis Compton)***

# CONCLUSION

Taking pride in our vision and commitment to the total image of a unified department, we consider it a privilege as well as an obligation to promote a discreet and non-judgmental attitude toward each member. Through consideration and consistently fair and supportive treatment of others and by sharing the success and accomplishments of each member's talents and strengths, organizational unity is promoted and productivity, morale, trust, and loyalty increased. As we hold ourselves and others accountable to these ideals, and through open communication, honest consideration, acceptance and respect for all members, internal relations is nurtured.

Internal relations is one of the most challenging organizational issues to address, but its impact on the organization's effectiveness is significant.

Instilling positive internal relations within our department is more than just the right thing to do, it is our personal and collective obligation to ourselves, to each other, to the organization, and to our external customers.

Every member has the responsibility to be a champion of positive internal relations. Champions directly and positively impact their surroundings through proactive action and example. They have the foresight, awareness, and sensitivity to handle challenging internal relationship issues with professionalism, discretion, and compassion.

***Our commitment to maintaining positive internal relations within our department is more than just a job, it must be our organizational way of life.***

# WORKING AT INTERNAL RELATIONS

The following employee situations have been included as a source for group discussion. As you work through the various situations refer to the Internal Relations Document for guidance. It is important to understand that there is no one right answer. Many answers and approaches can be appropriate. The employee situations are written to cover a broad spectrum of potential internal relationship issues. Let your experience help you through these, but be careful not to use or discuss actual incidents that might bring up old issues. When interacting with others, remember our internal relation's key behaviors: *consideration, discretion, acceptance, and unity.*

### Scenario #1: Employee to Customer

A customer walks into your work area. He is very angry and upset. He states that he was treated poorly and the service he received was substandard. His concerns are very specific and he appears to be sincere about his complaint. As you talk to him, the discussion becomes heated.

**Discussion:** How would you have handled the conversation when it became heated? What would you do with the information given to you by the citizen? What would be your course of action with the complaint?

### Scenario #2: Employee to Employee - Trust

You have discussed a personal issue with one of your fellow workers. Feeling that the discussion was confidential, you described your personal feelings concerning the matter. During the next workday, someone who was not part of the original conversation calls you and asks you about the issue. You then ask them how they heard about your feelings. The caller, answering your question with a bit of hesitation, responds by telling you that they weren't exactly sure who gave them the information.

**Discussion:** This is obviously a difficult situation for all three employees. How can the breach of trust be repaired? What are the responsibilities of everyone involved with this situation?

## Scenario #3: Employee to Employee - Personal Responsibility

Kim, a co-worker, has started bringing jokes from home, to work, and sending them to personnel throughout the office by interoffice mail. Although you feel that some of the jokes are very humorous, some of them can be considered inappropriate for the workplace, and you would feel uncomfortable if a citizen were to hear or see the joke.

**Discussion:** Sometimes, events occur that seem harmless at the time, but after re-evaluating the event, it could be judged as offensive, or inappropriate in nature. How do we enjoy the workplace (have fun)? Are there certain rules that we should follow? What things in this situation can you do as a coworker, friend and employee to help stop an issue from becoming a big problem?

## Scenario #4: Employee to Supervisor – Hostility

You have been assigned to a new work group and things are not going well. Your supervisor continually makes negative remarks about lower income customers. His statements include that "those" people must be lazy because they do not have an education or a good paying job. What your boss doesn't understand is that someone in your family that you have much respect for is one of "those" people.

**Discussion:** How would this make you feel? As the employee, what would your actions be? How could you let your supervisor know of how you feel? If you were the supervisor, how would you proceed once you knew what you said impacted one of your employees in this way?

### Scenario #5: Employee to Customer

You and another member are discussing an issue on the job site. There is disagreement between you and your coworker. As both sides of the issue are shared, a customer observes your interaction. The customer is obviously taken aback by your conversation.

**Discussion:** How could this situation be avoided? What steps can be taken to ensure that these types of conversations do not happen? If you had a chance, how would you describe the situation to the customer?

### Scenario #6: Supervisor to Employee - Personal Responsibility

An employee assigned to you has just recently completed a promotional process. The employee comes to you and proceeds to tell you how unfair the promotional test was. He states that the process promotes the "good ole boy" network, the oral board treated him unfairly and the written test was not fair. The employee is obviously distraught and feels terrible.

**Discussion:** As his supervisor what actions would you take? How much of the employee's "attitude" would you allow to be displayed?

### Scenario # 7: Supervisor to Employee - Leadership

Your crew has just completed their third significant major trauma call for the shift. A member of the CISM team has come to your station and has asked you if your crew needs to be debriefed. With your crew present, you state that you feel you are okay and then ask the remainder of your crew if they need any help. They each tell you that they also do not need help.

**Discussion:** Did your decision not to participate influence your crew in their decisions? What could have been a better approach? In what other situations could a decision you make negatively influence decisions made by others?

### Scenario # 8: Department to Department - Fairness and Respect

You are working with a team on a project that is going to need the assistance of another department within the city. When you contact the department, the individual states that they will not be able to assist you with meeting your time deadline. When you mention this to team members, they become angry and complain about the service that this particular department gives to the fire department.

**Discussion:** How does the behaviors within a group affect the performance of the team and the relationship with each other? What can be done to make sure that we as individuals of the fire department respect all city employees, and the jobs that they do?

### Scenario # 9: Customer to Employee – Hostility

You notice, from a distance that a customer is becoming very angry with one of your coworkers. From the looks of things the situation is getting worse. As you approach you notice that your coworker is now becoming angry and both individuals are arguing.

**Discussion:** How can this hostile situation, your coworker is involved in, be avoided? What are some steps that can be taken to help decrease the hostility between both individuals?

### Scenario # 10: Customer to Employee - Personal Responsibility / Fairness and Respect

A customer is requesting some help from your workgroup. When you ask the customer if you can help them, they state that they only need the men from the group to assist.

**Discussion:** What are some ways to make sure all members of the group feel they are part of the team? How can we help educate our customers that we are all equal and part of the team?

**Scenario # 11: Employee to Supervisor - Trust**

You notice that your supervisor tends not to participate training, and is always just beating the clock to come to work on time. In your discussions at work he talks about his side jobs and how he tends to "short change" the customers he works for.

**Discussion:** As an employee, how can you overcome this lack of trust you have for your supervisor? What might be done by you to help develop trust in the supervisor? As a supervisor, what needs to happen to regain the trust of your employees?

**Scenario # 12: Department to Department – Leadership**

While in a multi-departmental meeting, an issue was discussed and a request was expressed for volunteers to help solve the issue. While looking around the room, you notice that no one from the fire department is volunteering to help.

**Discussion:** What type of examples do we set for our department, within our city? How can we develop ourselves as leaders? What does accountability mean to you as an individual?

# INTERNAL RELATIONS TOOL KIT

The tool provided below is an example of the tools available in the Internal Relations Tool Kit. Use the additional tools available in the tool kit to assist you with internal relations.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflict can be constructive or destructive. It can be a catalyst to greater understanding and cooperation. But unchecked, conflict creates barriers to good communication, sabotages morale, boosts absenteeism, and can lead to lawsuits or worse.

## Overcoming Conflict:

- Know your own cultural perspectives, values, and beliefs
- Focus on problem/issue, not the person
- Hold one-on-one discussions early to "vent" hostilities
- Call and inform about meetings ahead of time
- Personal attacks & blame are not constructive
- Listen carefully, and don't be defensive
- Try to reach a consensus

**THE MESA FIRE DEPARTMENT**
**PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE**

**As An Organization And As Individual Members Of The Mesa Fire Department, We Will Do The Things We Say We Will...Try Our Best To Do Them Well Every Time...And Care About Our Customers, Their Property And Each Other.**