

	Policy and Procedure – West Fargo Fire Department	
	Subject: Fire Department Chaplain	
	Series: Administration	
	Date Authorized: 10/1/2018	Authorized by:
Date Reviewed: 12/1/2019	Chief Daniel Fuller	Policy 10.023

Intent

The intent of this Policy is to establish requirements for appointment and role of Chaplains for the West Fargo Fire Department.

Definitions

References

Policy

The West Fargo Fire Department Chaplain is appointed by the Chief of the Department after consultation with (a) the command staff, (b) currently serving chaplain and (c) the department personnel. All chaplains serve the department at the pleasure of and are held accountable by the West Fargo Fire Department Chief.

Status and Role

Fire Department Chaplains are volunteers and serve on a full time/24 hour on call basis for both the internal and external constituencies of the West Fargo Fire Department. The internal constituents being the fire department members and their families; external constituents being the citizens of the community which the department serves. The service of the Chaplain shall be provided on a generic religious and/or non-religious basis, depending on the needs and/or requests of the constituent served.

The Chaplain shall be an ordained minister of the Clergy who either (a) lives in West Fargo or (b) serves an established congregation within West Fargo. As Defined by IRS Pub 517, ministers are individuals who are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed by a religious body constituting a church or church denomination. Ministers have the authority to conduct religious worship, perform sacerdotal functions, and administer ordinances or sacraments according to the prescribed tenets and practices of that church or denomination. It is the sole discretion of the Chief, after consultation with staff, officers, the department and currently serving Chaplains to determine who may serve the department as a Chaplain.

To be considered, Ministers must be: (a) serving an established congregation, (b) on the Professional Ministerial roster of a recognized denomination, (c) be in “good standing” within their denomination, (d) have the ecclesiastical endorsement of their local judicatory for service as a Chaplain.

The Chaplain will receive department issued apparel, safety equipment and communication devices as needed. It is expected that the Chaplain will maintain these items in proper working order.

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The Chaplain is expected to continue his/her education and training in the art of pastoral care and the specific duties and responsibilities of a Fire Department Chaplain

General Guidelines

The Chaplain does not replace a member’s regular religious leader. Rather, the Chaplain seeks to support the concern of every church for its members who may be in professions with special risks or needs. Moreover, the Chaplain must support the concerns of every member of the department, regardless of his or her nationality, race, sex, or religion. However, it is also important to understand that Chaplains are bound to act only within the Canonical restrictions of their respective faith and office. If one Chaplain’s faith restricts him or her from conducting a particular service, that Chaplain will make every effort to contact a resource to try and accommodate the request of the member and their family.

Any communication a person makes to the Chaplain may be kept on a confidential basis, if requested, and will not be released to department members or any other person, subject to the requirements and limitations of local, state and federal statute and Canonical requirements of the Chaplain’s office. Any fire personnel may go to the Chaplain without having to notify his or her supervisor or anyone else.

Any fire department officer or member (including administrative staff) who becomes aware of any situation which may need the response of the Chaplain may contact the Chaplain directly. Fire department administration and command staff shall keep current telephone numbers for the Chaplain. Additionally, the contact information for the Chaplain shall be given to any Fire Department Members who requests it.

Chaplains are able to advise on religious, ethical, moral, and morale issues confronting the department, its members and the wider West Fargo Community. It is the chaplain’s job to watch out for the well-being of every person in the department, to serve as a moral and ethical thermostat, and to keep the Chief apprised of any issues or concerns without violating confidentiality.

Responsibilities to Internal Constituents

- A. Visit fire stations and shifts
- B. Visit hospitalized department members and members of their families who do not currently have clergy support
- C. Teach/Participate in training classes when requested
- D. Perform and/or assist with "line of duty" funerals

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- E. Perform weddings, baptisms, funerals when requested by members
- F. Provide confidential counsel to members in times of professional and/or personal stress or difficulty and refer out to an independent professionals when appropriate
- G. Member of the Critical Incident Debriefing Team when activated
- H. Attend Fire Department functions
- G. Respond to all firefighter fatality or major injury incidents, being available to make or assist with family notifications when requested by Executive Staff
- H. Hospital visits to membership, when requested
- I. Be available to Fire Chief and other members of Executive Staff for special assignments
- J. Intentionally build and maintain relationships with the Department though frequent station visits, special events and ride-a-longs
- K. Serve as a liaison between the Department and the Community, identifying potential new members and potential chaplains.
- K. When on scene, assist department personnel when asked.

Emergency Response Situations

The Chaplain will respond when contacted by dispatch or fire department personnel, or at his own discretion, and will report at the scene to the officer in charge. When at a scene, the Chaplain will be under the command authority of the incident commander. The Chaplain will usually respond as follows:

- a. To the scene when:
 - 1. A working fire of second alarm or greater is in progress.
 - 2. A critical incident is in progress.
 - 3. A critical injury or death to a firefighter is reported.
 - 4. The incident involves a victim that is a member of a department member’s family.
 - 5. Whenever the incident commander determines that the services of the Chaplain may be of value in the ongoing emergency operation. This may include situations where:
 - (a) The victim or family is highly emotional or unstable.
 - (b) Care is needed for the family of the victim while treatment is underway.
 - (c) The victim or the family requests the services of a chaplain or clergy.
 - (d) The incident commander feels the presence of the Chaplain would be of benefit to the victim or to department personnel.

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b. To the hospital when:

1. The incident commander or paramedic providing treatment determines that the victim or family may need support or counsel.
2. The victim’s family needs to be located and notified.
3. A member of the fire department is the victim.

c. In addition, the chaplain may also:

1. Counsel emergency service workers.
2. Counsel family members of Emergency Service workers.
3. Make death notifications and casualty calls.
4. Serve as part of a Critical Incident Management Team.
5. Serve as liaison with other clergy in the community.
6. Provide for the spiritual needs of department members and their families.
7. Offers prayers at special occasions such as recruit graduations and award ceremonies.
8. Provide an ear to listen and a shoulder to lean on.
9. Coordinate and provide family services in the event of the serious injury or death of an emergency service worker.

Follow-Up Actions

a. On-the-Scene Duties:

1. Provide appropriate victim assistance to free operational personnel for firefighting duties.
 - (a) Comfort and counsel
 - (b) Referral to appropriate community agencies for assistance.
 - (c) Help contact persons, insurance agents, family members, etc. In all cases, the Chaplain will find out a victim’s church or religious preference and attempt to notify the pastor or church.
2. Provide appropriate assistance to firefighters engaged in firefighting activities.
 - (a) Watch for signs of physical or emotional stress.
 - (b) Assist in providing firefighter needs (water, rest, etc.)
 - (c) Advise command whenever it is felt that a firefighter or EMS provider is in need of being relieved from emergency operations.

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b. Post-Emergency Duties:

1. Conduct follow-up to insure victims are receiving necessary assistance.
2. Insure firefighter’s needs are met in the areas of on-the-job injuries, critical incident stress, etc.

External Constituents Service Responsibilities

Respond for assistance, as requested by Alarm, Battalion Chief, or Field Units to the following type of incidents:

- A. Drownings
- B. Trauma codes, especially children
- C. Sudden Infant Death
- D. Suicides
- E. Airplane crashes
- F. Police Officer fatalities
- G. 10-50(F), 103,
- H. Pediatric Codes
- I. Murders
- J. Last rites when requested
- K. Fire fatalities
- L. Citizen death notifications to family members
- M. Funeral arrangements assistance and/or information
- N. Citizen funerals when requested by customer
- O. Any request by Fire Department Personnel to assist them in their duties.

Additional Duties

- A. Positively Represent the Department with in the wider West Fargo Community
- B. Participate in Department and community events
- C. Speak on behalf of the Department when requested
- D. Serve as Department Host for visitors when requested

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