

Operating Guideline # 1201

Professional Conduct

Created October 1, 2020

Reviewed June 20, 2022



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to establish guidelines for ethical behaviour at fire scenes by all MLFD members that projects a professional and caring attitude. This guideline provides information related to each members responsibility as a member of the Fire Department.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

Behaviours that project an uncaring and unprofessional attitude should be avoided and controlled through a conscious effort and an appreciation that others are “watching”. The Muskoka Lakes Fire Department has a well-earned reputation as a caring and professional organization and is held in high esteem by many people in our community.

Ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning character. Character is not necessarily defined by how a person behaves when conditions are optimal and life is good. It is easy to take the high road when the path is paved and obstacles are few or non-existent. Character is also defined by decisions made under pressure, when no one is looking, when the road contains land mines, and the way is obscured. As members of the Fire Service, we share a responsibility to project an ethical character of professionalism, integrity, compassion, loyalty and honesty in all that we do, all of the time.

We must accept this ethics challenge and be truly willing to maintain a culture that is consistent with the expectations outlined in this document. By doing so, we can create a legacy that validates and sustains the distinguished Fire Service institution, and at the same time ensure that we leave the Fire Service in better condition than when we arrived.

GUIDELINE:

1. Company officers as well as the Incident Commander shall be vigilant for unprofessional behaviours at any place where the department is observed by the public and act quickly to correct such behaviours that may be observed.
2. MLFD members who display unprofessional conduct on repeated occasions are subject to progressive discipline including dismissal.
3. MLFD members have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects proper ethical behaviors and integrity.
4. MLFD members will always conduct themselves, on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively on themselves, the fire department and the fire service in general.

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5. MLFD members will accept responsibility for our actions and for the consequences of our actions.
6. MLFD members will support the concept of fairness and the value of diverse thoughts and opinions.
7. MLFD members will avoid situations that would adversely affect the credibility or public perception of the fire service profession.
8. MLFD members will be truthful and honest at all times and report instances of cheating or other dishonest acts that compromise the integrity of the fire service.
9. MLFD members will conduct our personal affairs in a manner that does not improperly influence the performance of our duties, or bring discredit to MLFD.
10. MLFD members will be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.
11. MLFD members recognize that we serve in a position of public trust that requires stewardship in the honest & efficient use of publicly owned resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles & equipment & that these are protected from misuse & theft.
12. MLFD members exercise professionalism, competence, respect and loyalty in the performance of our duties and use information, confidential or otherwise, gained by virtue of our position, only to benefit those I am entrusted to serve.
13. MLFD members will avoid financial investments, outside employment, outside business interests or activities that conflict with or are enhanced by our official positions or have the potential to create the perception of impropriety.
14. MLFD members never propose or accept personal rewards, special privileges, benefits, advancement, honors or gifts that may create a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof.
15. MLFD members never engage in activities involving alcohol or other substance use or abuse that can impair our mental states or the performance of our duties and compromise safety.

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16. MLFD members never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap.

17. MLFD members never harass, intimidate or threaten fellow members of the service or the public and stop or report the actions of other firefighters who engage in such behaviors.

18. MLFD members responsibly use social networking, electronic communications, or other media technology opportunities in a manner that does not discredit, dishonor or embarrass the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council and Administration, the fire service and the public. MLFD members also understand that failure to resolve or report inappropriate use of social media equates to condoning this behavior.

Conduct

19. All employees shall exhibit a professional and courteous manner while on duty.

20. Conduct unbecoming an employee of the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department will be subject to strict disciplinary action. Examples of conduct unbecoming could include, but are not limited to, intoxication on-duty, commission of unlawful acts, willful false public criticism of the fire department or any member, etc.

21. Employees shall refrain from altercations and disorderly conduct.

22. Members of the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department will conduct themselves in a self-disciplined manner that will reflect positively on themselves and the fire department.

23. Members of the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department will be subject to all federal laws, provincial statutes, and municipal by laws.

Performance of Duty

24. Employees shall perform their duties promptly, efficiently, and in a quiet manner.

25. Employees shall always act in a diligent and expeditious manner when performing duties, both on the incident scene or around the fire station.

26. Employees shall serve with a sense of compassion and empathy to the public.

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Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

27. Employees are strictly prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on duty.
28. Employees shall not possess or use any controlled substance on or off duty; except with the approval and guidance of a licensed physician with a prescription.
29. While off-duty, employees shall not consume alcoholic beverages to the extent their behavior would bring discredit upon themselves or the department.
30. All forms of tobacco use and vaping are prohibited during contact with citizens and on emergency incident scenes.

Gambling

31. Employees shall not engage in gambling activities while on duty.

Uniforms

32. Employees, while on duty, shall wear the regulation uniform or bunker gear in accordance with that specific procedure, and shall keep themselves in a clean and well-kept appearance.
33. Employees shall not use their uniform for personal gain.

Orders from Superior Officers

34. Obedience to orders of officers shall be faithfully and promptly observed. Failure to promptly carry out orders shall be deemed insubordination on the part of the employee so ordered.

Personal Vehicles

35. Personal vehicles shall not be parked where they prohibit or disrupt access to the fire apparatus bays. Personal vehicles may be parked inside fire station bays as long as room is available and the safety and security of Muskoka Lakes apparatus is not compromised.
36. Employees are to park in the designated parking areas at their assigned fire station.
37. Personal vehicles shall only be used to respond to incidents by Officers and those firefighters approved by the Fire Chief with a working radio that enables them to provide key incident information. Officers choosing to respond to incidents directly will always be wearing a uniform or their assigned PPC to identify themselves appropriately.

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38. Firefighters are allowed to respond to incidents direct, ONLY after all fire apparatus have left their assigned stations.

39. Personal owned vehicles must avoid parking in areas that could create more issues for the evolving incident.

Station Security

40. The last member to retire for the evening will see that all doors are secured and lights turned off, except the bank over the bunker gear.

41. Employees shall not use fire stations or department property for personal gain.

Station Living

42. Employees are to be respectful towards other employee's personal property and privacy. This includes a prohibition on taking or displaying unwanted photos or videos.