



Contact: John Curran
Town of Billerica
Phone 978 671 0942
Fax 978 671 0947

365 Boston Road
Billerica, MA 01862
Phone 978 671 0942
Fax 978 671 0947

Press Release

The Town of Billerica has placed four members of the Fire Department on leave pending disciplinary hearings.

Town to implement corrective action plan to ensure activities that are alleged do not occur in the future

Billerica, MA April 12, 2017: Statement of Town Manager John C. Curran:

The Town is currently conducting a personnel investigation of sexual misconduct within the Fire Department. There is a great concern that alleged activities of certain employees within the fire department may compromise the Town's ability to deliver the highest and best level of public safety service to the Town and its residents. There is no evidence that the actual public safety service or calls delivered to this point have been compromised. However, it is the highest priority of the Town to ensure that this kind of alleged conduct does not occur in the future and that the systemic and cultural deficits that may contribute to this type of conduct within the department are corrected. The Town has placed four fire department employees on paid administrative leave pending disciplinary hearings. Other notices of discipline will follow.

The Town Manager's Office will be implementing the following corrective actions:

Operations Assessment

The Facilities Assessment Study of the Fire Department approved by Town Meeting will also include a performance management component. Specifically it will include an operations assessment that will focus on management structure.

Reorganization

It is apparent from the level of investigation that has already taken place that the mid-level command staff is often unclear of what their role is from a management and command perspective. Under the direction of Chief Thomas Conway, the Town will restructure the mid-level command staff of the Fire Department to ensure that there is greater opportunity for broad based management experience.

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Management Training

The Town has scheduled management training for April 11, 12th and 13th that pertains directly to the misconduct issues and how they should be handled by command staff. The first training seminar, *Firefighter Misconduct: The Company Officer's Role & Responsibility*, addresses discipline, leadership, and ethics training with an overview of the challenges posed by digital imagery and social media. It examines the role that firehouse culture plays in misconduct and offers concrete solutions to officers.

The second training seminar is *Managing Disciplinary Challenges in the Fire Service* – it is intended for chiefs and fire officers who may have to investigate misconduct by firefighters, as well as union representatives who may need to advise members during an internal investigation. The program looks at the causes for disciplinary problems and explains proven methods for conducting a fair and impartial investigation.

Sexual Harassment Training

Although the Town has provided sexual harassment training in the past the Town will immediately retrain all Fire Department Staff on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. These training seminars will begin in May. It will heighten employee's awareness of harassment in the workplace. Federal or State Laws and Municipal policies will be reviewed. The Town will continue this training throughout other Town Departments.

Visitor Policies Enacted

The Town has drafted a visitor policy that is effective immediately. Violators of this policy can be subject to discipline up to and including termination