



Warning: Hot Coffee!

The Emerging Issue of Fire Service Ethics

No. HC-2012-2 September 5, 2012

Learning Objective: The student shall be able to identify a source for the National Society of Executive Fire Officers and Congressional Fire Services Institute Code of Ethics.

Today's fire service leaders face a variety of challenges managing budgets, personnel, and programs. Occasionally, ethical issues emerge for which there are no easy answers.

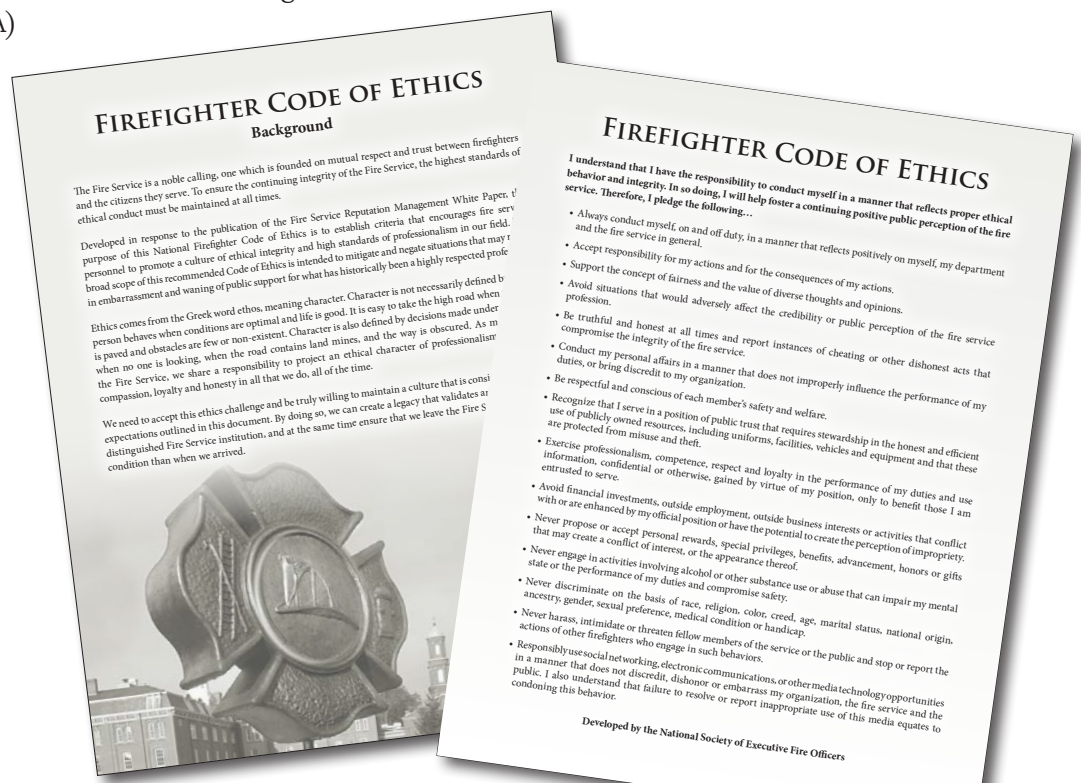
To provide guidance to address these complex questions, the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) and Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) jointly have released a firefighter code of ethics that can be adopted by local fire and emergency medical service organizations. The ethics statement is the result of almost 2 years of effort by the Board of Directors of NSEFO.

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 nonexistent. 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 need to 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.

In acknowledgement of the importance of this first-of-its-kind fire service ethics statement, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) has posted the statement throughout the National Fire Academy (NFA) facilities and will now include the statement in all course materials distributed to NFA students.

To download a copy of the NSEFO statement suitable for posting within fire department facilities and for distribution, visit the USFA website at www.usfa.fema.gov/fireservice/



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