

**Handout 1-1**

**Precourse Assignment**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rank:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions**

This is the precourse assignment for *Politics and the White Helmet* (PWH). This assignment is designed to prepare you for the classroom activities and discussions in the course. Several of the activities will require the use of the information you develop in this assignment. By completing the assignment, the discussions in class will have more meaning to your personal situation and will develop the skills you hope to take away from the course. In short, the time you spend will be well worth the effort. You can anticipate that the assignment will require 2 to 3 hours to complete.

You may type your answers into this document. After entering your answers, save the document. Please bring two copies with you to class: you will submit one copy at the beginning of the course and use the other copy as reference during the activities and discussions.

Thank you for your time. Good luck in the course.

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1. Answer the following questions about your local government political structure. Please include an organizational chart which identifies your organization, the department head (fire chief, EMS director, etc.), and their relationship to senior appointed and elected officials.

a. Who is the senior appointed official? This could be a city manager, county manager, etc.

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b. Who does the department head (fire chief, EMS manager, etc.), report to within the structure?

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c. Who is the leading elected official, e.g., mayor, county commissioner, board president, etc.?

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d. What political organization (authority having jurisdiction (AHJ)) grants your organization its authority, e.g., city council, county commission, special district board, etc.?

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2. What authority is provided to the department head (fire chief, EMS manager, etc.), by the local AHJ? If available, attach a copy of the city ordinance, code, etc., which outlines that authority.

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3. In your own words, define "politics" as it applies to your position as a department head or senior officer/manager in your organization.

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4. Rate your level of participation in the local public policy process when it involves fire department issues. For example, how involved are you in decisions made by the city council, district board, county commissioners, etc., pertaining to your organization? How involved are you with the organization's budget approval? Select the one which best describes your level of involvement.

- I do not participate in the local public policy process.
- I attend meetings of the local elected officials (AHJ).
- I only provide input on public policy to my supervisor when requested.
- I periodically provide input on public policy to my supervisor.
- I regularly provide input on public policy to my supervisor.

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5. Interview a senior appointed or elected official about the leading concerns of citizens in the community. The goal is to get **his/her perspective** about the leading citizen concerns. The concerns **do not** have to involve fire protection or emergency medical service (EMS); they may be of any issue in the community. You may conduct the interview by phone or email if that is more convenient. You may use the questions provided below for the interview.

a. What general issues do you believe are the greatest concern to the citizens in our community?

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b. Why do you believe those are the greatest concern to the citizens?

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6. Describe the public's perception of your organization. How did you determine the public's perception, e.g., survey, comments from the public, comments to members of the organization, etc.?

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7. Describe the three most critical issues facing your local fire department or emergency services organization. Do any of the issues involve local politics? Please explain.

Issue 1:

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Issue 2:

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Issue 3:

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## Handout 2-1

### Professional Development and Keys to Success

1. Take a college class on civics or politics.
  2. Search/Read books and share them with your peers.
  3. Find a mentor you can regularly talk to that you trust.
  4. Attend your board or council meetings regularly.
  5. Join a local civic organization or business group.
  6. Have your department join the Chamber of Commerce or Business Roundtable.
  7. Establish a mission and value statement for your department.
  8. Seek better and smarter ways to do things.
  9. Always do what you promised to do.
  10. Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk in everything you do.
  11. Maintain your credibility at all times. If it feels bad, it probably is.
  12. Support positive change in your organization.
  13. Stop making excuses for yourself and others.
  14. Identify your strong areas/talents and make the most of them.
  15. Always try to make your best impression through your words and actions.
  16. Read books, magazines, and online articles outside the emergency services.
  17. Have a written plan for your department's future.
  18. Seek solutions that work and meet your mission statement and values.
  19. Ask the key questions about the issue.
  20. Be aware of your budget status at all times.
  21. Stay in touch with your local politics first and State second.
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22. Dress and act the part of the chief or head of the agency.
  23. Watch out for the little things; they can hurt the most.
  24. First you must survive--for your department and your family.
  25. Your customers are correct.
  26. Trust the information you receive but verify and validate it.
  27. Take calculated risks but understand the risks.
  28. Stay in touch with reality at all times.
  29. Consider the impact on your staff when making decisions.
  30. Listen to the advice of your peers and staff.
  31. Learn to delegate effectively.
  32. Always have your business card with you at all times.
  33. Know and understand the priorities of your board or council members.
  34. Know and understand the priorities of your manager or agency head.
  35. Know and understand your own personal values.
  36. Know when and how to say no when no is the right choice.
  37. Identify how to relieve your personal stress.
  38. Respect everyone's personal beliefs.
  39. Watch one TED.com (Technology, Entertainment & Design) session each month.
  40. Keep your faith, family, and work in perspective....and in the right order.
  41. Remember you will make mistakes. Get over it and move on with life.
  42. Avoid "make work" projects just to look busy.
  43. Measure outcome rather than outputs.
  44. It's your "ship," your "watch" so take responsibility.
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45. Give credit to the people who did the work.
46. Believe in others.
47. Choose healthy options in all parts of your life.
48. Use your values as a steering wheel rather than as a spare tire.
49. Know what are you committed to and what your passion is.
50. Identify how to relieve your personal stress.
51. Smile.

