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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and effective chain of command within the Winsted Fire Department (WFD). The chain of command defines authority, responsibility, and communication pathways to ensure efficient operations, accountability, and safety during both emergency and non-emergency activities.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all officers, firefighters, probationary members, support personnel, and administrative staff of the Winsted Fire Department. It governs conduct and communication in all departmental functions, including emergency response, training, public education, maintenance, and administrative activities.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Winsted Fire Department operates under a structured chain of command that defines reporting relationships and ensures that orders flow from the Fire Chief through subordinate officers to all members.

All members are required to follow the established chain of command for both operational and administrative matters. This structure promotes:

- Clear communication
- Efficient decision-making
- Accountability and discipline
- Member safety and operational effectiveness

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE:

Chief/Command Officers:

Fire Chief

- Overall authority and responsibility for all department operations and personnel.
- Reports to: Town/City Administrator, Board of Fire Commissioners, or Governing Authority.
- Duties:
 - Oversees fire suppression, EMS, rescue, and support services.
 - Implement policies, SOPs/SOGs, and ensures compliance with laws and standards.

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- Manages the department budget and capital planning.
- Serves as the Incident Commander at major emergencies or designates command.

Assistant Chief

- Acts in the absence of the Fire Chief.
- Supervises Deputy Chief, Operations, Training, and Support Services.
- Supports the leadership and daily operation, as directed by the Chief.

Deputy Chief

- Acts in the absence of Chief and Assistant Chief
- Supervises Operations officers (Captains and Lieutenants) and Support Services (Captain and Lieutenant)
- Supports administrative and operational functions, as directed by the Assistant Chief

General Staff/Line Officers

Captains

- Responsible for the supervision of firefighters within their assigned company or apparatus.
- Ensures readiness of personnel, equipment, and apparatus.
- Directs operations at incidents until relieved by a higher-ranking officer.
- Conducts training, safety briefings, and performance evaluations.

Lieutenants

- Assist the Captain in supervising members and maintaining discipline.
- May oversee specific areas such as:
 - Exterior Operations
 - Support Services (Fire Police, Rehab, Cadets, etc.)
 - Apparatus Maintenance or EMS
- Acts as officer-in-charge (OIC) in the absence of the captain.

Firefighters

- Perform assigned duties in fire suppression, rescue, EMS, and support functions.
- Follow orders of officers and maintain situational awareness.
- Report safety hazards or operational concerns through their immediate supervisor.

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Support Services Branch

Support Services Lieutenant

- Oversees Fire Police, Rehab, Juniors/Cadets, and Mental Health/Peer Support.
- Reports directly to the captain identified to oversee the Support Services Branch.
- Ensures that non-operational members receive appropriate training and direction

Administrative Staff

- Handle business functions of the fire department (committee meetings, finances, records, etc.).
- Operate independently of the operational chain of command but coordinate with the Fire Chief as needed.

CHAIN OF COMMAND HEIRARCHY:

Operational Command Structure (Highest to Lowest):

1. Fire Chief
2. Deputy/Assistant Chief
3. Captains
4. Lieutenants
5. Firefighter/Support Services Staff

During incidents, the Incident Command System (ICS) shall be followed in accordance with NIMS (National Incident Management System) standards.

PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATIONS:

- Members shall address concerns, requests, or reports through their immediate supervisor.
- If a matter cannot be resolved, it may be escalated one level up the chain.
- In cases involving misconduct or personnel matters, confidentiality shall be maintained.
- Directly bypassing the chain of command is prohibited unless:
 - Immediate safety is at risk, or
 - Directed by the Fire Chief or his/her designee

DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY:

Each level of command has the authority to enforce discipline consistent with departmental policies and bylaws:

- **Lieutenants:** Provide verbal counseling and written warnings.
- **Captains:** Issue formal written reports and recommend suspension.

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- **Chief Officers:** May impose suspension, demotion, or recommend termination subject to department bylaws and town policies.

TRAINING AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

All officers shall receive leadership and management training appropriate to their rank. The Chief or Assistant Chief/Training Officer will ensure all members understand the chain of command and follow it during drills, meetings, and incidents.