TAKE 5 FOR SAFETY

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

5-MINUTE SAFETY DRILL

Civil Rights: Jokes Can Cause Hurt

Date:_____

Shift:_____

Dept:_____

Station:_____

Training Code:_____

NOTES:

FOCUS: Inappropriate jokes can create problems between team members. If not handled appropriately these jokes or pranks can create liability exposures which can be very destructive and costly.

CHALLENGE

Laughter is important for our general health and happiness. Sharing laughter can be the framework for building stronger teams and friendships. Jokes are often the vehicle used to generate laughter. These jokes may take the form of pranks or teasing. Most of us enjoy jokes whether they are about us personally or others.

However, jokes have come under increased scrutiny in recent years. This is because too often the jokes have been at the expense of an individual's dignity. The line has been crossed when the subject of the joke does not enjoy it. In fact, repeated jokes at the expense of a person can be considered a form of harassment or "bullying".

"Bullying" is a focused attack on an individual with the intent to cause harm. This harm may take the form of physical, verbal or nonverbal activity directed at the intended victim. The result is emotional damage to the person resulting in a loss of dignity.

Many districts have had complaints and law suits filed against them as a result of these "bullying" activities which have created a hostile work environment for the person being targeted. Inappropriate jokes create morale problems and destroy team camaraderie. Let's make sure our jokes are truly "harmless" and everyone is having fun!

DISCUSSION

- Are practical jokes played on team members at our district?
- Is "one" person targeted more than others?
- Would you enjoy the joke if it were played on you?
- Have you ever intervened when jokes went too far?
- Has the district had problems resulting from firefighter complaints?
- How has the district handled the situation?
- Do you feel this was adequate?
- Was there any retaliation against the person filing the complaint?
- What's the district's policy on harassment?
- How often is training provided on anti-harassment?
- What can be done to eliminate the bullying environment?

The greatest asset of the fire service is our people; protect them!

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