

Fauquier County Department of Fire Rescue

RULE & REGULATION

No. 111



Family and Consensual Relationships

Effective Date: May 30, 2017
Revision Date:

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Forms:

Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren L. Stevens".

PURPOSE

To establish a policy regarding family and consensual relationships between personnel/members within the Fauquier County Department of Fire Rescue ("Department") that will prevent relationships that involve or give the appearance of partiality, preferential treatment, or the improper use of rank or position for personal benefit or gain, and to establish a policy that prevents a restriction of management's ability to use personnel resources in the most effective manner.

SCOPE

This regulation applies to all Department members career, administrative and part-time.

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Family relationships. Relationships and interaction between family members related by blood, marriage, or living arrangements.
- B. Consensual relationships. Amorous, romantic, intimate, and sexual relationships between members of the Department, including contacts deemed to be the nature of dating or other pre-arranged social activities (which are personal in nature and not professional).
- C. Personnel, employees, and/or members. All career, uniformed, civilian, temporary, and contract members/employees of the Department.

II. POLICY

In an organization such as the Fauquier County Fire Rescue, social interaction between employees is inevitable. However, amorous, romantic, or intimate, as well as family relationships, between superiors/managers and subordinates undermine the sound operation of the Department for the following reasons:

Desire to Serve

Ability to Perform

Courage to Act

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1. They cause actual or perceived partiality or unfairness regarding employment/participation benefits or conditions.
2. They may lead to instances of sexual harassment in the workplace.
3. They may interfere with the functioning of the superior-subordinate relationship.
4. They may result in the improper use of rank or position for personal benefit or gain.
5. They create an actual or clearly predictable adverse impact on discipline, authority, or morale.
6. They may reflect negatively on the organization.
7. They may result in a violation of the Department's standard of conduct policy as an equal employment opportunity employer.

Therefore:

- A. An employee or member of the Department shall not be hired, approved for operational status, reinstated, re-employed, transferred, promoted, demoted, or retained in a position which places him/her in a supervisory line with a family member or partner in a consensual relationship.
- B. This prohibition shall include positions in which the duties involve access, review, verification, authorization, or approval of the transactions of family members or partners in financial, operational, personnel, purchasing, or other sensitive matters. All exceptions shall be approved by the fire chief.
- C. Employees/members with supervisory authority shall not abuse their authority through actions such as favoritism, harassment, or mistreatment of employees. Supervisors are prohibited from having personal relations beyond a normal professional or friendly acquaintance with any employee/member under their supervision. Sexual or other inappropriate relationships between supervisors and subordinate employees/members is strictly prohibited.
- D. Consensual or family member relationships between employees/members who serve at peer levels within the Department are not necessarily considered to be a violation of best management practices. Personal matters/business shall remain outside the work environment and are not to be conducted while on duty. Likewise, all inappropriate displays of affection between family members/consensual partners while on duty are prohibited and there shall be no cohabitation of sleeping facilities permitted.

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III. PROCEDURE

- A. Any employee/member who finds himself/herself regularly assigned to a position that places them as either a supervisor or subordinate to a family member, or someone whom they have a consensual relationship with, must notify the fire chief immediately. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal.

- B. Family members or consensual partners shall not be regularly assigned to work together when a supervisor-subordinate relationship exists. In order to ensure that supervisory and subordinate family members or consensual partners are not regularly assigned together, any of the following remedies may be applied, if available, to assist employees with gaining compliance with this policy:
 - 1. Assignment to a different geographical battalion or division within the county
 - 2. Assignment to a different work schedule (shift) within the Department
 - 3. Request for voluntary demotion by the affected supervisor

In the event that the above remedies to this conflict are not available or are unacceptable to the employee(s), separation from employment with the Department may become the only viable alternative.