

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION	LEADING FIREFIGHTERS EXAMINATION
PAPER	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
SUBJECT	EMPLOYMENT
ITEM	INFORMAL DISCIPLINE
STUDY NOTE No.	1304

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE

This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied:

The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography.

INFORMAL DISCIPLINE

1. Introduction

To understand the underlying principles to be observed in maintaining discipline, we should be aware of the basic requirements for discipline which include:

- (a) a system of rules;
- (b) a training programme; and
- (c) training that produces:
 - (i) compliance and support;
 - (ii) orderliness;
 - (iii) self-control; and
 - (iv) team work.

The maintenance of discipline does not mean the automatic application of the Discipline Regulations; rather it is the common sense approach of a senior to his subordinates, mainly by example.

2. General Attitude to Discipline

Teamwork under conditions of strict discipline is essential to efficiency and safety. At fires and other emergencies the saving of life and the safety of one's colleagues depends on unhesitating response to commands. This is derived from a high degree of training, awareness of one's personal responsibility and mutual confidence between all concerned, officers and subordinates alike. In the sphere of routine station affairs and in the day-to-day relationships between officers, junior officers and those under their command, the observance of discipline is equally important as a basis for a well run and competent station.

The onus of example rests upon each rank and, in particular, upon the officer-in-charge of the station. If the ability, diligence, courage and integrity of the officers are seen to be beyond reproach, discipline may be inspired rather than coerced and both the proficiency and the morale of the station will greatly benefit. Subject always to the best interests of the service, rigidity should be tempered by proper consideration for the individual.

In handling personnel, all ranks should exercise the following qualities:

- (a) fairness;
- (b) understanding;
- (c) firmness;
- (d) tact;

- (e) consistency; and
- (f) good manners.

Orders and information given to personnel should be given in a form, which is readily acceptable and understandable. Clear identification of objectives and correct procedure must be given. Individuals should know exactly where they stand regarding their responsibilities in complying with instructions, etc.

3. Discipline Relative to Welfare

Welfare and discipline are often found to be intertwined in handling day-to-day matters. Officers should always try to develop social awareness since they may be called on to counsel subordinates in such matters as:

- (a) domestic problems;
- (b) marital problems;
- (c) financial problems;
- (d) drug or alcohol abuse; and
- (e) family illness or bereavement.

If poor performance is not due to laziness or lack of effort, it can often be attributed to some of the above problems. Counselling in these areas may be important, and the Leading Fire fighter will need to seek the assistance of a more senior officer if this appears to be the case.

4. Point at which Discipline takes over from Welfare

There is obviously a time when circumstances may arise where the Discipline Regulations appear that they may have to be applied.

Under these circumstances, the Junior Officer should advise the person concerned that they are to be reported to the watch or station commander and any further discussion on the matter should cease until the report has been made. The principles and working of the Discipline Regulations and the Code of Practice require a precise format to be followed in respect of applying formal discipline and the inexperienced junior officer could jeopardise this through a lack of knowledge and understanding of the procedures.

References

Fire Services Examinations Board