



Fire Department

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June 28, 2020

MEDIA ALERT

Milwaukee Fire Department Investigates Internal Situation

On February 13, 2020, Milwaukee Fire Department Administration was alerted to the presence of a brown figurine found hanging by a pink looped ribbon in a Milwaukee fire station. An investigation was immediately initiated. Instantly upon being questioned, the member responsible for bringing the figurine into the fire station and displaying it in the manner described self-identified. The investigation has now resulted in the identification of numerous members of the Milwaukee Fire Department, from the ranks of Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief, and Deputy Chief, who were aware of or *should have been aware of*, the potential for the presence of this figurine displayed in this manner to create a workplace not conducive to a diverse, welcoming, safe, and non-hostile environment. Based upon the facts uncovered in the investigation, charges have been drawn up and are scheduled to be read this week. Additionally, numerous members will have letters of reprimand placed in their files, memorializing their failure to maintain good order.

While the investigation's findings do not reveal a deliberate or intentional racist or sexist intent, nor an effort to target any individual member or group, it is no small matter that our failure, collectively, to maintain and reinforce an environment and culture within which an occurrence such as this would instantly be questioned and stopped, bears much responsibility for this. The Milwaukee Fire Department finds any word, action, or deed which negatively impacts any of our members (or members of the many vibrant communities we serve) based upon age, culture, ethnicity, race, religious expression, sexual orientation, gender expression, or the expression of unique philosophies and ideas, in a word, reprehensible.

We affirm our mission to attain and foster a diverse work force. We affirm our goals to provide all of our employees the opportunity and growth at every rank on the Milwaukee Fire Department, and, we reinforce our expectation that all employees will treat each other with dignity and respect, regardless of perceived differences. The Milwaukee Fire Department understands this incident did not meet our expectations or our obligations, and we have work to do in order to rebuild the trust and solid relations we have long enjoyed across all communities.

The situation described above is an opportunity to fully understand actions we take, even if unintended, can be disrespectful and hurtful toward others. The most important result of this situation is that we all learn from this misstep.

At the direction of our civilian oversight body, the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, with whom we have been communicating throughout this process and to whom we will ultimately turn over all investigatory materials, the Milwaukee Fire Department will be undergoing department-wide anti-harassment training within the next few months. Further, in concert with the Milwaukee Brotherhood of Firefighters and the Milwaukee Fire Department's senior management, an educational video highlighting and reinforcing our standards and our collective responsibility to achieve those standards will be produced and distributed internally. It is our hope that from this wretched episode greater understanding and positive and real change will occur.

A press conference, likely later this week, will be held to provide more details. A media alert with additional details will be forthcoming.

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