

**FIRE DEPARTMENT
SANTA CLARA COUNTY**

Probationary Firefighter Expectations

By Steve Prziborowski

Welcome to County Fire! The purpose of this is to ensure that we are on the same page with each other; whether on the fireground or at the fire station, it is paramount that we safely and competently perform and accomplish the duties expected of us. So you know where I am coming from, here are my two most important goals for us each shift as well as my general expectations:

1. To allow each of us to go home safely at the end of our shift.
2. To impart knowledge that will assist you in your daily operations and with your fire service career. My job is to provide you with the necessary information to someday either take my position or be the best firefighter that you can be. Whether you want to promote or not is up to you. Even if you decide to remain a firefighter, you still have an obligation to assist our team in getting the job done and even more importantly, passing your knowledge and experience on to our newest firefighters so that they can one day do the same to other firefighters.

If you are functioning as the firefighter or engineer:

I expect you to.....

- Be familiar with all aspects of your apparatus
- Know how to operate and use every piece of equipment on the apparatus
- Be considerate of local neighbors when performing your apparatus and/or equipment checkout.
- Ensure that our apparatus is wiped down at the end of our shift. Cleaning the windows, tires, hand tools, power tools, & other equipment are functions to perform as needed. These items are not “busy-work.” They are typically things that just need to be done on a regular basis.
- Know your first-in district streets, target hazards, and other unique and/or related items that may be of importance. I also expect you to be familiar with your second-due district streets and target hazards. I don’t expect you to know every single street in your second-due district, but I think you should know every street in your first-due district after at least a year at the station.
- Ask me questions whenever you are not sure about your assignment or duties.
- Advise me of any special needs you may require, whether they are related to training, department business, or personal business. I consider myself very flexible if you give me proper and adequate notice.
- Perform the required daily and weekly station, apparatus, and equipment maintenance and checkouts that are necessary, without me having to ask you to do so.

- NOT PICK UP YOUR CELL PHONE WHILE ON THE APPARATUS OR ON A CALL!
- Put up or take down the flags if they have not been done (some stations have lit flag poles; thus this is not an issue). Also, when taking down the flags, please fold them in the proper and respectful way they are intended to be folded.
- Leave the station, apparatus, & equipment in excellent condition for the oncoming crew.
- Check for the presence of a T-card in the morning during your apparatus and equipment checkout. If it has not yet been completed, please take the time to complete one.
- Be familiar with the Fire Department Rules and Regulations, Policy Manual, Training Manuals, and Automatic Aid/Mutual Aid binders. They are there for a reason, and they will guide us in our everyday activities.
- Always “keep me in the loop,” I hate surprises.
- Know the address and cross street of every County Fire facility, including what type of equipment and staffing is kept at each facility.
- Know how to get from one fire station to another. At the time we get a move-up to another fire station is not the time to have to ask “how do we get there?”
- Have eaten breakfast prior to getting to the station so that in case we have to leave immediately, your little tum-tum is not empty.
- Listen to the County Fire radio during the day so that you are aware of what the other resources in our Department are doing at all times. Knowing that our normal second-due engine is on an EMS call or out-of-service due to being at the shop (or our Truck and Rescue are unavailable due to a Special Operations training session) can make a major difference in our responses (because we might have to go into their area) as well as our strategy and tactics.
- Know the names and assignments/duties/responsibilities of all County Fire Personnel, especially the A-staff and B-staff members. This is to include not just the suppression personnel, but the personnel assigned to Headquarters or other County Fire related facilities. There is nothing worse than not knowing who we need to contact for various issues that may come up in the course of our employment. This will definitely be one of your tougher things to accomplish, since we don’t always interact with many of the other personnel employed by our Department. Remember that Rome wasn’t conquered in a day; this will be an on-going process!
- Last but not least, I expect you not to know everything! Every one of us should strive to continue learning at least one new thing every day of our life! The day we think we know it all is the day we’re opening up ourselves to failure and to letting Murphy’s Law takeover.

If you are functioning as the engineer:

I expect you to.....

- Know the vehicle code and department policies related to driving apparatus.

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- Know the limitations and specifications of your apparatus.
- Know where you are going prior to leaving the station (when dispatched to a call). I sincerely feel it is the driver's responsibility to get the crew to the street we are responding to, not my responsibility. Once we are on the street, then I will zero you into the exact location. If that means meeting up with me in the office to look at the run card or looking at the digital map before we leave the station, then so be it.
- Let me know a.s.a.p. of any deficiencies that you noted during your daily DMV pre-trip inspection.
- Actually do the COMPLETE DMV pre-trip inspection every day, which includes the air brake check, checking under the cab in the engine compartment area, as well as checking the play in the slack adjusters.

If you are functioning as the firefighter (riding in the back seat):

I expect you to.....

- Let the engineer know (either through the headset or by knocking twice on the glass) that you are secured in your seat and ready to go.
- Not get off of the apparatus until you hear the air brakes and either hear me say it is ok to get off or you see me in the process of getting off.

If you are functioning as the paramedic:

I expect you to...

- Treat every patient like they were your best friend or family member.
- Know your Santa Clara County EMS Protocols.
- On vehicle accidents, immediately let me know how many patients we have and what priority they are (immediate, delayed, minor, deceased). This will allow me to call for the appropriate additional resources.
- Not ask me for an ETA for the ambulance. It will get here when it gets here. Also, I've seen too many paramedics ask for ETA's when they don't want to implement a treatment modality. Do what is right at that moment for the patient. An ETA really doesn't do anything for us anyway, especially since we are set up to provide paramedic level care to our patients.
- Not have any expired items (medications, monitor patches, etc.) on the apparatus. If it is expired, then it needs to be pulled off a.s.a.p.
- Let me know a.s.a.p. of any deficiencies in regards to your EMS equipment.

General Fire Department Expectations that will make you a better firefighter:

1. If you open it, CLOSE IT!

2. If you turn it on, **TURN IT OFF!**
3. If you unlock it, **LOCK IT!**
4. If you break it, **REPAIR IT!** (And report it to me a.s.a.p.)
5. If you can't fix it, **CALL IN SOMEONE WHO CAN!**
6. If you borrow it, **RETURN IT!**
7. If you use it, **TAKE CARE OF IT!**
8. If you make a mess, **CLEAN IT UP!**
9. If you move it, **PUT IT BACK!**
10. If it belongs to someone else, **GET PERMISSION TO USE IT!**
11. If you don't know how to operate it, **LEAVE IT ALONE!**
12. If it doesn't concern you, **DON'T MESS WITH IT!**

While this might seem like I am expecting a lot of you, please understand where I am coming from. My goal is to set you up for success with the Santa Clara County Fire Department. The training you received in the Academy was just scratching the surface in regards to your knowledge base. While you still have a great deal of knowledge and experience to gain, I want to at least allow you to see where I am coming from and what I expect of you.

Your goal should be to be a "low maintenance" Firefighter / Engineer for any of the Captains you work with (just like my goal is to be a "low maintenance" Captain for my Battalion Chief. I don't think I'm asking too much of you or that I have high expectations of someone in your position. All I am doing is challenging you to be the best that you can be for the Department and the customers we provide service to; I don't think that is asking too much of you or asking you to do anything that is out of line.

Why am I doing this? Because the customers we serve deserve the best and I will do everything in my power to ensure that they get the best level of service that we can provide. **Short and sweet – just do your job, be responsible and accountable for your actions (or non-actions), and have fun!** This is the greatest job in the world that I can think of; and we need to make the best of it.

Thanks for taking the time to listen; your assistance and effort in meeting these expectations is appreciated!

If at any time you have any questions or concerns, or if I can be of assistance to you in any way, please feel free to contact me on my cellular phone at (408) 205-9006. Good luck with your probationary period!