

LAKEWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING GUIDLINE

SOG NUMBER: 100.02	RULE & REGULATION
DATE IMPLEMENTED: MARCH 12, 2019 DATE REVISED: JUNE 13, 2022	TITLE: WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

PURPOSE:

To describe and to ensure the consistency of the various forms of departmental written and electronic communications and the procedures related to their implementation, distribution, and use.

SCOPE:

This SOG shall pertain to the Chief of Department as well as his/her designee(s) in all official communications to personnel of the Lakewood Fire Department both career and volunteer (operational and administrative).

GENERAL:

In order to enhance the clarity of communications as well as the safety, efficiency and professionalism of the Fire Department, all official communications issued by the Chief of Department as well as his/her designee(s) shall be distributed through PowerDMS and other means of electronic communication as necessary.

1. All official communication shall be designated as either Policies, Standard Operating Guidelines, General Orders or Standing General Orders, Informational Bulletins, Safety Bulletins and Manuals. These communications are differentiated as noted below:
 - A. Policies – establish and support the principal or direction of the Fire District. Filed by title. Policies must be approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners prior to issuance.
 - B. Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's) –A Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) is an organizational directive that establishes a course of action related to the administrative and operational activity of the fire department. SOG's shall apply to all fire department and organizational units, unless otherwise specified. SOG's shall be considered permanent unless changed through modification or deletion and subsequent guideline. Any department member may submit a recommendation to change or issuance of an SOG. Recommendations shall be submitted through the chain of command to the fire chief's office for review. SOG's must be approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners prior to issuance. SOG's shall be separated into two categories:
 - I. Rules and Regulations (R&R's) – Rules and Regulations (R&R) are formal codes governing the actions of departmental members with respect to the organization. These principles shall be considered as absolute directives requiring strict compliance by all personnel. Violations of rules and regulations shall be handled as a disciplinary issue.

- II. Operating Procedures (OP's) - A Operating Procedure (OP) is an organizational directive that establishes a prescribed course of action related to the operational activity of the fire department. Deviations from OP's shall not be permitted except under extenuating circumstances with appropriate justification. Violation of an OP, without cause, shall be handled as a disciplinary issue.
- C. General Order or Standing General Orders - A General Order (GO) or Standing General Order (SGO) is a formal directive that applies to one or more persons, either by name or by class/group, to take some specific action(s). These documents generally have a specific time period (start and end date) and should include an expiration date if appropriate. An SGO would not include an expiration date. GO/SGO's shall be maintained at each fire station in a three-ring binder, or two ring clip board provided for that purpose, and maintained in electronic form in PowerDMS or other location. In January of each year, the fire chief's office shall issue a general order identifying obsolete GO/SGO's and directing that they be removed from the fire station general order binders or board. Failure to comply with a general order shall be handled as a disciplinary issue.
- Distinction between SOG's and General Orders: By their continuing nature, SOG's differ from General Orders which direct specific action within a specific time period, except in instances of standing general orders. SOG's shall not be published and issued as general orders except in instances where time is critical, and it is essential that personnel receive a directive in a time frame not allowed by the normal SOG preparation period. These emergencies shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the fire chief or designee. When approved, the general order shall contain a notation indicating that an SOG or similar continuing document will follow. It shall be the responsibility of the chief's office to ensure that the appropriate document is initiated, at least as a draft, within 30 days.
- D. Informational Bulletins - Informational Bulletin (IB) is a document designed to convey material for the general knowledge or interest of the recipients. Any department member may initiate an informational bulletin. Informational bulletins shall be submitted through the chain of command to the fire chief's office for approval. If approved, it shall be numbered, dated, reproduced, and distributed by the fire chief's office in accordance with the standard distribution process.
- E. Safety Bulletin - Safety Bulletin (SB) is a published document designed to convey safety- related information to all department members. Information conveyed in a safety bulletin typically will be critical to the safe operations of all department members. Safety bulletins may also cover critical safety related information from other organizations that may have an impact on our operations, such as NIOSH, PEOSH, DFS, NFPA or other departments. Safety bulletins shall be distributed to each fire station and posted through electronic means. Information contained in a safety bulletin shall be read by all department members.
- F. Manuals - Manuals are published documents designed to provide an overview of the policies, procedures, and practices of the Lakewood Fire District. Manuals must be approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners prior to issuance.

2. General Orders, Standing General Orders, Informational Bulletins, and Safety Bulletins, issued by the Chief of Department or designee(s) shall be in the proper written form with the date of issuance and signature affixed.
3. The Chief of Department or designee(s) shall submit the respective communication to the Fire District Administrator or designee to post and distribute same to all members through PowerDMS.
4. Should the Chief of Department or designee need to issue a time sensitive General Order, Standing General Order, Informational Bulletin, or Safety Bulletin, he or she may do so using other means (Active 911, Email, Text, etc.); however, that communication will be followed ASAP by posting and distributing to all members through PowerDMS.
5. Each employee / member shall be responsible for reviewing these documents as appropriate.
6. Upon separation for any reason, the employee / member shall be responsible for returning to the district any official documentation, including media and printed documents.
7. All Fire Department written communications are the property of the Lakewood Fire District. They are official documents subject to the provisions of the Open Public Records Act (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1), although some may be exempt from disclosure if they involve personnel, security, deliberative, or similar matters. All OPRA requests should be addressed to the Fire District Administrator, who is the records custodian. To assure uniformity and legal compliance, all records should be disclosed only by the Fire District Administrator.
8. Under no circumstances may Fire Department communications be placed or posted on the Internet or otherwise disclosed to anyone outside the Lakewood Fire District without the prior approval of the Fire District Administrator or his/her designee.