

THE ORANGE COUNTY FIRE WAY



Orange County Fire Authority

“Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grieves which we endure help us in our marching onward.”

Henry Ford (1863-1947)

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Executive Summary

In 1998, the Mission, Vision, and Values Project Team began drafting Orange County Fire Authority's (OCFA's) new Mission Statement and organizational values.

To find out what was in OCFA members' hearts and minds, the team conducted various surveys and polls. During this process, the project team learned of the strong personal values guiding members in their lives. Unsurprisingly, the OCFA owes its success to these values – its members' sense of right from wrong and desire to do things correctly. In addition, members revealed how they liked to be treated and how they wanted their leaders to lead. Members share many of these overlapping values and beliefs.

To record these views, then Fire Chief Chip Prather requested the project team create this organizational philosophy statement – The Orange County Fire Way (referred to herein as *The OCFA Way*). He envisioned turning these personal values into organizational values – making them a part of the organization itself. Indeed, the organization has grown to view *The OCFA Way* as defining “*who we are*” with a deep sense of common purpose and belonging, no matter what job, rank, or title each individual member holds.

In 2019, *The OCFA Way* was reinvigorated with incoming Fire Chief Brian Fennessy, who recognized its value to the membership and wanted to leverage it as a foundation for the next evolution of philosophical and operational thinking. Chief Fennessy believes that an evolution in thinking is necessary to operate effectively in an increasingly complex environment, which is characterized by rising risks and increasing public expectations. A new normal is emerging in the fire service, one that introduces many unknowns and unprecedented firsts. Although technological advances are being made throughout fire services, there is a growing need for developing the human side of the service—particularly leadership, cohesiveness, adaptability, resiliency, decision making, and sound judgment. *How we do it* has become as important as *what we do* and *who we are*.

This 2019 version of *The OCFA Way* refreshes our mission and vision, while preserving our personal values and organizational philosophies that have come to define *who we are*. *The OCFA Way* complements our new focus on mission-driven culture, which defines how we accomplish our mission through the OCFA Operational Doctrine (under development) and existing policies, procedures, and General Orders. As we continue progressing forward, we envision adding additional elements to this library of resources, intended to inform behaviors, attitudes, and further define *how we do it*.

Collectively, these organizational philosophies and standards provide a deeper and stronger support system for guiding decisions and actions. The more we reflect on the ideas contained here, the more we can bring them to life in our everyday experiences.

Introduction

The Orange County Fire Authority's (OCFA's) governance and history make it a unique organization. Its leaders are committed to excellence in service, and they believe that providing the best support for all members maintains this goal.

The OCFA Way presents individual and group behavioral practices for positive and constructive interaction among the members and the community. **Importantly, this document is not intended to be a Standard Operating Procedure or General Order, nor will OCFA use this document as a disciplinary tool or device.** Rather, it describes the philosophical standards and ideals that are a part of our culture and define who we are. We succeed and grow by creating and maintaining an open-minded, problem solving, and respectful environment. With this regard and accountability at all levels, we will all have positive, fulfilling, and productive work experiences.

Over the years and under many different names, the OCFA's members have shaped the organization into what we see today. Accepting this and learning from experience, the OCFA knows its success is a result of its members' contributions. To attract and keep first-class members, we are striving to create and maintain an environment where both the individual and the organization can flourish.

The development and adoption of our Mission Statement, Vision, and Organizational Values – created with input from members – was the first step in defining the OCFA. The next was to give our members this organizational philosophy statement, *The OCFA Way*, a document of shared values helping to cultivate respect and organizational enrichment. It illustrates how all members can best treat the public and each other.

Explaining this philosophy is not easy; this document is both descriptive and visionary. It not only portrays the OCFA today, but it also paints a picture of how we see ourselves in the future. This document has been an important step in the evolution of our organization, and our members can continue to update it as the organization evolves.

For this organization to function its best, every OCFA member must want to belong. When you choose to belong, our values come alive through your actions. Respect and concern for each other preserves our well-being and serves the common good of the public we protect.

The Key Elements Make it Happen

Our Mission, Vision, Values and Service Principles

Plain and simple, the purpose of the OCFA is to serve. Service is the core of our mission and the heart of our vision. Indeed, serving the public is the very reason our organization exists. We have a mandate to provide public safety services throughout Orange County, and we extend that service beyond Orange County. Our constituency relies on us to fulfill our mission in whatever circumstances we are called to assist. Reflecting the fundamental reason the OCFA exists, our mission statement is:

“We proudly serve the changing needs of our communities by providing exceptional emergency and support services. We pledge a commitment to preserving the quality of life.”

Our vision sets the focus on what “right” looks like at the highest level for those we serve. It serves as a focal point and identity for our entire organization. When the day is over, we can look at our vision and ask, “Did we do this today?” With this foundation in mind, our vision statement is:

“We are dedicated to protecting lives and property with first class public safety and emergency services through courage, compassion, and competency.”

The original 1998 *OCFA Way* captured the strong personal values that were in OCFA members’ hearts and minds and it envisioned turning these personal values into organizational values – making them a part of the organization itself. Our members continue to view these values as defining “who we are” with a deep sense of common purpose and belonging, no matter what job, rank, or title each individual member holds. For these reasons, our refreshed 2019 *OCFA Way* builds upon our original “PEOPLE” values and connects these values with our original “Guiding Principles” (now referred to as “Service Principles”), which are intended to philosophically guide our members’ behaviors:

“We rely on our PEOPLE and our Service Principles as we carry out our mission with:

- **P**rofessionalism
- **E**nthusiasm
- **O**rganizational Integrity
- **P**ride
- **L**eadership
- **E**ffectiveness”

Our Service Principles

SERVICE

The OCFA is committed to serving as an integral part of the communities. We will seek out, develop, and maintain relationships with citizens, businesses, and public and private agencies to continually assess customer needs and ensure direct correlation with service delivery programs. The following Service Principles guide our relationship with each other, and with our customers:

SAFETY

We commit to the health, safety, and welfare of the community and our members, protecting them through enhancing our capability and readiness. In serving, we aim to retain the strength

and effectiveness of our community response through eliminating preventable work-related injuries and illnesses through the systematic management of our risks.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We consider the financial implications in all aspects of service delivery, programs, and business practices to ensure a sustainable future.

TEAMWORK

Teamwork is the basis of our success. We work as a team because we value each other, the communities we serve, and our commitment to the OCFA mission.

TRUST

The foundation of our success is the trust that we earn from the communities we serve and the trust that we have in each other.

EXCELLENCE

In targeting excellence as the cornerstone of all we do, we improve the quality of life for the people we serve.

ETHICS

We take pride in maintaining the highest ethical standards in all of our actions.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

We contribute positively toward the OCFA mission and accept accountability for our responsibilities.

CARE AND RESPECT

We treat the communities we serve and each other with care and respect.

HONESTY AND FAIRNESS

We treat everyone in an impartial and honest manner that is free from self-interest and bias.

RELIABILITY

Our commitment to the public we serve is unwavering and consistent. This commitment is fully expressed in our motto: *“In service of others!”*

DIVERSITY

We value the ideas and creativity contributed through the diversity in our community and our members.

INTEGRITY

Whenever we make a decision, provide a service, or interact with others, we act with strong character and integrity, treating all people equally.

The OCFA Way - Who We Are

Belonging to the OCFA is a privilege and a responsibility. Our organization is respected and admired both by the communities we protect and other fire departments. Our members have earned this reputation by committing to our Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Personal Values, and Service Principles.

Every member has ownership in the direction of the OCFA, and each member is responsible for supporting the OCFA culture. We are committed to serving with honor, devotion, and dedication. Each day we serve is an opportunity to make someone else's day better. Whether answering calls or answering questions, we remain true to our Personal Values and Service Principles in all we do:

- **A passion for excellence.** We value the proud traditions of the fire service, exemplifying the highest levels of excellence and professionalism, demonstrating effectiveness in the eyes of each other and in the eyes of the public. We continually look for ways to provide better service to our communities.

Values:

- Duty – holding the OCFA's mission as the focal point, guiding actions and priorities.
 - Professionalism – being accountable to and modeling the best practices, ideals, and values of OCFA.
- **A depth of character.** A depth of character enables us to build trust with others by seeking accountability and demonstrating reliability and loyalty. We are dedicated to each other as well as to the OCFA organization and its mission. With dedication to the tenets of courage, honesty, and integrity, we act with a spirit of fairness, respect, and high regard for each other and those that we serve.

Values:

- Integrity – serving with honor and sincerity, consistently and openly pursuing truth and providing truth in our dealings with others, using a moral and ethical internal compass that communicates to others that you are here for the right reasons.
 - Respect – acting with honesty and trustworthiness, being worthy of the respect of others, affording others honest opportunities to gain your respect, treating others with an impartial and honest manner, free from self-interest or prejudice.
- **A duty to act.** Duty-bound to be vigilant for error and emerging danger, each of us has the responsibility to act with initiative and courage, to exhibit a bias for action.

Value:

- Courage – possessing the moral and psychological stamina and bravery to stand apart; risking the prospect of embarrassment or uncertainty; to be accountable for your words and behavior.
- **A passion to improve.** We are motivated by a desire to improve our own skills and abilities and to help others improve for the collective good.

Value:

- Self-improvement – being responsible for your own learning and development, actively seeking new opportunities to build your own capabilities, contributing to the improvement of team processes and dynamics.

Promoting and Supporting The OCFA Way

The OCFA is committed to excellence in service to the community and our members. Settling for work considered “good enough” is simply not a part of our culture. Excellence in every service we perform whether internally or externally, is our philosophy---our “way.”

OCFA members support our “way” in all we do:

Duty

- Focusing on our mission
- Working as a team---both internally and externally with our member agencies and partners

Professionalism

- Representing the organization with the highest level of professionalism and integrity
- Demonstrating a quiet professionalism and celebrating our history and culture

Integrity

- Aligning behavior with our values---visibly and consistently
- Acknowledging that each member, regardless of position, is just as valuable as the next
- Accepting accountability for the actions we take and the commitments we make

Respect

- Recognizing the value of diversity in our community and one another
- Showing respect for all, regardless of differing roles, perspectives, and opinions
- Fostering respect for individuals and the community by being the first to show respect for others
- Never taking our organization or one another for granted

Courage

- Facing challenges and turning them into successes
- Stepping forward to prevent harmful things from happening
- Stepping forward to make good things happen

Self-Improvement

- Taking risks and seeing mistakes as opportunities for greater improvement
- Supporting one another as we learn from our mistakes

Supporting an Environment Conducive to The OCFA Way

Each member has a responsibility to support an environment conducive to our “way.” To provide the best support, the OCFA strives to maintain an environment where:

- Trust is the cornerstone in personal relations

- Everyone, no matter position or rank, is a stakeholder in our success
- Contributions, achievements, and individual ideas are valued, encouraged, and celebrated
- Every member commits to supporting and helping fellow members
- Leaders are accessible, approachable, and responsive
- Leadership provides and supports vision and direction
- Leaders set the example and seek opportunities for others to be leaders
- We promote health, wellness, and personal family balance
- Ideas and creativity are encouraged
- Personal ownership, accountability, and responsibility are fostered
- Open and honest communication is the norm
- Commitment to positive labor-management relations is an ongoing process
- Education, training, and technology are embraced as a means of doing our job better
- Assisting and caring for each other are obligations we willingly accept
- Professional and personal development is necessary for organizational growth
- Essential support services are provided and readily available for all members.

Being Responsible

Each member is responsible for supporting the OCFA and the culture we create. If we do this, we can deliver excellent service and meet our needs as well as the communities' changing needs.

Self-discipline is the foundation for managing behavior. Members of the OCFA are responsible and accountable for individual actions and the impact these actions have on others. Members can maintain a positive work environment by committing to personal responsibility and self-discipline. If everyone behaves in a manner conforming to the philosophies of the OCFA, members will require minimal supervision. However, when we face personal and/or work-related problems during our careers, we should be responsible and seek the necessary assistance.

The following three behaviors, when practiced regularly, can create a positive work environment:

- **Be Accountable** – Consider the consequences of your actions; do not shift blame or take credit not due; avoid the victim mentality and lead by example.
- **Practice Self-Restraint** – Exercise self-control for the sake of reason, prudence, and duty; this includes avoiding adoption of the attitude, “Win at any cost.”
- **Pursue Excellence** – Practice diligence, continuous improvement, and perseverance to complete what you begin – no matter how difficult the task.

All members of the OCFA are encouraged to practice these behaviors throughout their careers. *We should never allow personal conflicts to jeopardize the effectiveness of the group and distract us from accomplishing our mission.* The Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you – is alive and well in the OCFA. Keep in mind, **“It all begins with me.”**

Every member reinforces his/her importance in the organization through conduct and performance. Some things you can only do for yourself. No system can overcome a member's lack of personal respect for himself/herself or respect for others.

Basically, **you receive the respect you earn – regardless of your position in the system.** Your reputation is a valuable possession – it starts your first day here. Guard it.

Making Ethical Decisions

We all make difficult decisions in our lives and as members of the OCFA. The decisions we make affect the organization, the communities we serve, and ourselves. In making good decisions, we strive to understand the appropriate factors that potentially influence whether we can go forward with a course of action. By doing so, we can understand the process and clarify our thinking. Some common factors that should be considered for any decision we make include:

- **Is it right for the customer?**
- **Is it right for the OCFA?**
- **Is it legal, ethical, and nice?**
- **Is it safe?**
- **Is it on your organizational level?**
- **Is it something for which you are willing to held accountable?**
- **Is it consistent with the OCFA’s values and policies?**

Emphasizing Teamwork, Support of One Another, and Leaving No One Behind

The work environment at the OCFA emphasizes teamwork, and we support one another throughout our careers. When new members harness this support to improve their performance they make the organization stronger and better. Our focus and commitment must remain on doing what is in the best interest of all. Our reliance and trust in each other is not accidental. We care for each other and demonstrate this in various ways. We don’t leave struggling members behind, but instead, we support and care for them to help them overcome their struggles. We guide them back to a positive path. We build on each other’s successes and learn from their difficult experiences. This care strengthens our bonds and allows members to know we can rely on each other in times of true need.

Making the Commitment

As previously stated, yet worth repeating, belonging to the OCFA is a privilege and a responsibility. Members come to the OCFA with various talents and abilities. Our jobs require us to make these skills available when the community needs us; however, we also must make these skills available for each other when our needs arise. Because we are committed to serving with honor, devotion, and dedication, we expect others to treat us the same. We should give everyone the same level of respect; we are all valued members – regardless of position.

The motivation and enthusiasm of each member is critical for the OCFA’s success. While we need organizational rules, they should not detract from the ability to succeed. We seek participation from individual members, member organizations, and outside interests in the development of important business practices. Once developed, members should support implementation in a way that is consistent with the OCFA’s mission and goals.

The OCFA's approach to carrying out our mission places emphasis on our members. We encourage an environment of trust, and we believe in the importance of sharing accurate information. Unless the situation requires privacy – such as some personal, legal, and personnel matters – the OCFA believes it is best to keep issues out in the open.

As members carry out responsibilities, especially during times of change, they should realize there could be good and bad results. All too often, members judge the organization during times of difficulty. They fail to reappraise the situation during better times. Members can maintain a healthy perspective by providing feedback “up the chain.” Additionally, as individuals, our members make the organization what it is...remembering this can help guide our conduct.

The OCFA's strength lives within the members themselves. Believing this, we must accept that our weaknesses also stem from the members themselves. Accordingly, each member needs to identify, control, modify and eliminate behavior counterproductive to our goals, objectives, and mission. This is a universal responsibility – regardless of the member's role, assignment, or title. Membership in the OCFA brings a great deal of pride and opportunity for success. It also carries an obligation to participate in a responsible manner.

Always remember, the OCFA's goal is not to attain perfection, but to strive for individual and collective excellence. We can do this best when members contribute in a constructive way toward maintaining and improving our environment. We understand, through this ongoing contributory process, we will continue to thrive.

Honoring Our Traditions & Valuing Our Service

OCFA has a proud tradition and a dynamic future. Our success is, and will be, a result of our members in the past, present and future. Our commitment means:

- We value the proud traditions of the fire service.
- We have a history of change and evolution since Orange County's inception.
- We recognize our organization consists of a unique and constantly evolving membership.
- We recognize the accomplishments of our members.
- We appreciate our successes and learn from mistakes.
- We know commitment is easy during good times, and lessons are learned during bad times.
- Our past actions have created what we are today.
- Our future actions will influence what we will be tomorrow.
- We respect and value our members' experience.
- We strive to create an environment where members benefit from our accomplishments.
- We, as members, have an opportunity to develop the leaders of tomorrow.
- We value our retirees by including them and communicating with them.
- We continue sharing our traditions, knowledge, and values to prepare the OCFA for future challenges.