

# Office of the State Fire Commissioner



## Pennsylvania State Fire Academy Instructor Code of Professionalism

Issued 1/27/2020

## **I. General Requirements of Professionalism**

Local Level Instructors (“Instructors”) shall follow and promote the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (“PSFA”) ideals of honesty, courtesy, personal accountability, capability, personal development, accuracy and the exchange of knowledge when dealing with students, other Instructors, the public, employers and the Educational Training Agency (“ETA”).

The Instructor shall adhere to the following principles:

1. **ABIDE by the signed Code of Ethics/Conduct.**
2. Instruct courses in accordance with PSFA and respective ETA policy, guidelines, Instructor Policies, circulars and regulations of these entities.
3. Present only those principles, practices and information, which represent accepted state and national standards in emergency service.
4. Promote health and safety standards that insure the protection of everyone participating in the training.
5. Attend recognized training courses, seminars and/or conferences at least once a year to increase knowledge and improve instructional skills.
6. Offer and promote attitudes that will improve municipal fire and emergency service policies, procedures, and performance.
7. Perform all work assigned by PSFA and/or the respective ETA in accordance with established rules and regulations.
8. Accept compensation from one employing agency only.
9. Recommend and/or evaluate a prospective Instructor objectively and without prejudice when requested to do so.
10. Report any unethical, illegal, unfair or inappropriate actions of an Instructor to PSFA and the respective ETA.
11. Refrain from political partisanship when instructing.
12. Always appear well groomed and properly attired and be attentive to the conduct of self and colleagues in a professional manner immediately before, during, and immediately after training sessions.
13. Evaluate student competency in a training session by maintaining personal attention to the student(s) skill ability.

14. Refrain from, and prohibit, the use of tobacco, drug or alcohol products while instructing in a classroom or during any training exercise.
15. Carefully choose words and tone of voice, making every effort to avoid emotional discussions immediately before, during and immediately after training sessions. Profanity is not appropriate or condoned.
16. Submit paperwork and reports in a timely fashion as required by PSFA and the respective ETA.
17. Make notification and submit proper paperwork when accidents and or near-miss incidents occur during a training session.
18. Assist organizations in preparing and submitting the required paperwork for a structural burn session in an acquired structure in accordance with the Structural Burn/Live Fire Policy.
19. When necessary, administer discipline in a manner that promotes student growth and will not embarrass or humiliate the student before his or her peers. Disciplinary actions shall be made part of appropriate student/class records.
20. Participate in continued professional development education that meets PSFA requirements, keeps the Instructor current in PSFA policies, procedures, and methods, and maintains/improves his/her knowledge and skill in adult instruction and the technical aspects of courses that he/she is accredited to teach.

## **II. Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination**

It is the firm policy of PSFA that every person involved with one of its fire training classes in any way whatsoever shall have an experience completely free from any type of harassment or discrimination based on any reason, including, but not limited to, that person's race, gender, creed, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. The PSFA policy in this regard is one of **"zero tolerance"** for any such harassment or discrimination.

In the case of a disability covered under the Americans With Disabilities Act, the knowledge and skill prerequisites and Job Performance Requirements of the appropriate National Fire Protection Association ("NFPA") Professional Qualifications Standards series are the Essential Job Functions that apply. Instructors will permit and encourage full participation of disabled students in all courses by making reasonable accommodations per the ETA of record where such accommodations allow a student to perform these Essential Job Functions and fully meet course objectives.

As the individuals ultimately responsible for class demeanor and conduct, it is the responsibility of each Instructor to firmly adhere to this policy and to ensure that every person (students, assistants, support staff, observers, and bystanders) fully complies with this policy always under their supervision and control. Instructors are expected to take every opportunity to actively promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity and are expected to include training in managing diversity in the fire service and the educational environment in their presentations and their own professional development.

Failure to adhere to this policy shall be considered a serious offense. If subsequent investigation substantiates an Instructor's failure to do so, he/she may expect firm disciplinary action up to and including permanent revocation of Instructor credentials.

### **III. Instructor Dress Code**

An Instructor shall be mindful that appearance and dress reflects directly upon safety and correct procedural practices, and upon the reputation of the Instructor, PSFA and any ETA.

1. In accordance with NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program and relevant Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”) regulations, Instructors shall **NOT** conduct any class requiring the use, by students or Instructors, of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus or other respiratory protection while displaying facial hair that would interfere with the effective use of the respiratory protection or provide a poor example of firefighter health and safety.
2. Instructors shall dress in a professional manner and consistent with the activities to be undertaken and the needs of the audience. The wearing of uniforms or dress attire should not take precedence over personal safety.
3. Special Notes
  - a. Any attire worn by Instructors during hands-on exercises or competency testing shall meet the minimum safety standards as set forth in the current NFPA 1500 and/or appropriate OSHA-EPA Standards.

- b. Fabrics and materials of uniforms, work clothes, and turnout gear should meet current standards or their successors. However, since this may not always be economically feasible, PSFA will recognize other materials that do not compromise safety.
- c. Any attire (shirts, hats, jackets, trousers, etc.) that promotes products, services, or vulgar/slang phrases are strictly prohibited.

## **IV. Suspension or Revocation of Instructor Credentials**

### **A. Discipline**

Discipline for non-compliance with this Instructor Code of Professionalism, the Instructor Code of Ethics/Conduct or the Instructor Policy shall be administered by PSFA staff, in cooperation with the affected ETA. Discipline may vary from a documented verbal reprimand up to and including suspension and permanent revocation of an Instructor's credentials at the discretion of the PSFA Administrator.

### **B. Discipline Review**

For disciplinary matters, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner ("OSFC") and PSFA may engage an advisory body known as the Disciplinary Review Committee ("DRC"). The Instructor Review Committee will act as the DRC. The DRC will review all disciplinary action against an Instructor prior to discipline being placed against the Instructor(s) in question. For practice matters, the PSFA Administrator may also engage the DRC for an advisory recommendation. All DRC recommendations of action(s) will be given to the PSFA Administrator for consideration. However, the PSFA Administrator may act unilaterally without an advisory recommendation when conduct warrants. The PSFA Administrator's decision will be **FINAL**.

### **C. Administrative Recall of Instructor Credentials**

Instructor credentials shall be recalled and held by PSFA if an Instructor has been charged in a criminal proceeding of a Misdemeanor 2 or higher until the case has been adjudicated. During that time, the Instructor shall not be permitted to act as a PSFA Local Level Instructor. If not convicted, the Instructor's credentials will be reinstated without prejudice.

## D. Suspension

In accordance with this document, an Instructor may have his/her Instructor credentials suspended. An Instructor who is suspended will **not** be routinely removed from the Instructor Roster, but the Instructor shall not be permitted to:

- Instruct specific courses
- Issue certificates
- Attend specific training activities

Cause for Suspension may be, but is not limited to:

1. Failure to report injuries sustained by instructional staff, students or bystanders during a training program to PSFA or the respective ETA.
2. Failure, **more than two (2) times**, to conform to established records submission guidelines or local level class management procedures.
3. Failure to provide the number of hours of instruction called for in a course, Minimum Standards for Accreditation, plan of instruction, or as indicated on the Certificate of Training.
4. Issuance of a Certificate of Training to an individual who has not met the competency and attendance requirements for the identified course Minimum Standard of Accreditation.
5. Use of identification or assignment as an Instructor for the promotion of commercial product sales for personal gain or for a commercial interest.
6. Conduct, in the capacity as an Instructor, which publicly reflects disrepute on the training program, other Instructors, an ETA, OSFC, PSFA, or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This includes the use of social media to publicly express negative comments/opinions against those stated in previous sentence.
7. Failure to report an arrest for a first or second-degree misdemeanor or felony **within three (3) weeks of notification of charges** from the District Justice.
8. Presentation of any class in PSFA's curriculum, Resident, Academy on the Road or Local Level as fire suppression course while displaying facial hair that would interfere with the effective use of respiratory protection or provide a poor example of firefighter health and safety.
9. Submission of falsified reports of their instructional performance or course activity that has detrimental effects on the training program or its management.

10. Failure to promote the use of proper personal protective equipment by students and all course Instructors.
11. Failure to require students and all course Instructors to use proper personal protective equipment in the performance of training exercises that present a risk to the personal safety of the student and Instructor(s).
12. Failure to ensure that all students are provided with proper personal protective equipment appropriate for the course and activities they are participating in.
13. Failure to attend required in-service Instructor Workshops conducted by PSFA or the respective ETA.
14. Partisan political statements and/or activities during course related activities.
15. Use of profanity or unacceptable gestures immediately before, during, and immediately after course related activities.
16. Failure to conform to this Instructor Code of Professionalism, the Instructor Code of Ethics/Conduct or the Instructor Policy.

#### **E. Revocation**

An Instructor's credentials may be permanently revoked for any of, but not limited to, the following reasons:

1. Disregard for safety and health regulations.
2. Appearance before a class while under the influence of any mind-altering substance.
3. Theft of equipment or other property from a fire school, fire department, ETA, PSFA or any individual or private entity.
4. Use of any combustible/flammable liquids as a fire accelerant during structural firefighting training activities.
5. Any attempt to obtain payment for work in conducting a training course from a second employing agency after having already arranged for compensation for that service by a first employing agency.
6. Conviction of any criminal charge(s) of a Misdemeanor 2 or greater.
7. Failure to adhere to the PSFA Equal Opportunity and Non- Discrimination Policy as stated in this Code.
8. Failure to conform to this Instructor Code of Professionalism, the Instructor Code of Ethics/Conduct or the Instructor Policy.

**V. Delegation of Program Management**

The State Fire Commissioner delegates ongoing management and implementation of this directive to authorized PSFA staff of the program involved unless or until withdrawn. Specific responsibilities are placed upon the PSFA Administrator, PSFA Assistant Administrator, PSFA Fire Education Specialists – Field Supervisors, and PSFA staff.

**VI. Authority**

Title 35 Health and Safety as amended and Act 61 of 1995, the State Fire Commissioner Act.

**VII. Duration of Policy**

This Instructor Code of Professionalism shall remain in effect until superseded or suspended.

**VIII. Effective Date**

January 27, 2020  
Date Approved:



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State Fire Commissioner



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State Fire Academy Administrator