

**Billings Fire Department
General Information for
Employee Complaint and Commendation Process**

FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

Thank you for taking the time to let us know how the Billings Fire Department is doing.

The Fire Department expects a very high level of professional conduct from all employees; however, members of the department frequently perform their duties in a manner exceeding the highest standards of the department. We appreciate it when a member of our community takes the time to let us know when one of our employees does a good job. Please feel free to use the attached form to let us know if you received commendable services from one of our employees.

The Fire Department also wants to know how we can better improve the service we provide to the community. Community service depends on a working partnership between the Fire Department and the citizens we serve.

A citizen complaint/compliment, and its subsequent investigation/commendation, allows us to examine the service we provide to our community.

WHEN SHOULD YOU FILE A COMPLAINT?

A complaint should be filed when you believe a member of the Billings Fire Department has acted improperly in the course of his/her work. Whether the complaint is related to discourteous treatment, or any other action you believe to be wrong, we want to know about it.

WHEN SHOULD YOU FILE A COMMENDATION?

There is no greater form of recognition an employee can receive than a compliment from someone whose life we have touched and made better. Commendations can consist of any form of recognition from a citizen's letter to the award of a letter from the Fire Chief or a City STAR award. Please include the specific action which impressed you or helped you. The circumstances surrounding the employee's action will be considered when deciding the level of recognition the employee deserves. In all cases, especially letters of appreciation, the Fire Department employee and his or her supervisor and the Fire Chief are made aware of the outstanding performance and a copy of the letter is placed in the employee's personnel file.

WHERE TO OBTAIN A COMPLAINT / COMMENDATION FORM?

For the public's convenience, complaint/commendation forms are available at the Fire Administration headquarters office and Fire Station One, located at 2305 8th Avenue North, Billings, MT 59101, it is also available online under "Quick Links" at <http://ci.billings.mt.us/index.aspx?nid=110>

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT OR COMMENDATION

A complaint or commendation may be filed by faxing (406-657-8456), mailing (Fire Chief, 2305 8th Avenue North, Billings, MT 59103), or bringing your complaint/commendation form to the Fire Department Administration at 2305 8th Avenue North. If you fax or mail your form in, please address it to the Fire Chief.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION WHEN YOU FILE

When you file your complaint/commendation, please include as much information as possible in your description of the event, such as the date, time, and exact location of the incident; the name of employee if known, description of the employee; name, telephone number and/or address of any potential witnesses; and any other evidence you feel may be important such as copies of documentation, photographs, etc.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Anonymous complaints, or complaints from citizens who wish their names to be held in confidence, shall be accepted for investigation. Citizens offering anonymous complaints are advised that our ability to investigate the complaint may be limited by their anonymity.

WHAT THE BILLINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT DOES WITH YOUR COMPLAINT

The first step in the complaint process is an assessment from the Assistant Fire Chief. The Fire Chief or Assistant Fire Chief will determine if an investigation is necessary and identify who will investigate the complaint. Complaints involving Fire Administration will be directed to the appropriate level of supervision.

You may be contacted by a Department representative for an interview. This interview may be conducted by phone, or in some cases in person. After this interview, the supervisor will discuss the matter with the employee, to include any disciplinary or suggested corrective action deemed necessary.

Your interview may be taped and you may be required to provide a written statement regarding the situation.

Complainants are advised that any complaint determined to be a false complaint or a complaint that involves a criminal offense may be referred to Law Enforcement for the appropriate investigation. Complainants are advised that the filing of a false complaint may result in criminal prosecution.

HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE

All attempts will be made to complete investigations of complaints within 30 days from the date they are received. The Chief or Assistant Chief may extend that time due to circumstances that prevent the completion of the investigation, e.g., availability of employees and witnesses, location of witnesses, evidence, etc. You will be notified about any delays in the investigation and final disposition of your complaint.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE INVESTIGATION

If the employee is found **not to be** in violation of any policy, procedure, or criminal statute, the complaint will be closed with no further action needed.

If the employee is found **to be** in violation of any policy, procedure, or criminal statute, the investigator will have identified the relevant violation in their report. Fire Administration staff will then review the investigation and make any decisions as to disciplinary or corrective action in accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

In severe cases, disciplinary action may result in termination of employment, demotion, or suspension without pay. Other less severe sanctions may include training and counseling by supervisory staff. The Fire Chief is the final Department authority for discipline.

Regardless of the outcome of your complaint, you will be notified in writing of the results of the investigation.

APPEAL OF DECISIONS

The investigative disposition within the department of any citizen complaint rests with the Fire Chief. Should you disagree with the Chief's assessment or disposition of your complaint, you may file an appeal for final disposition with the City Administrator, P.O. Box 1178, Billings, MT 59103.

If you have any questions or for more information about this process you may contact the Office of Professional Standards at 406-657-8421.

