

ARTICLE 59 - INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Section 59.1 Purpose:

To establish policies, procedures, and responsibilities for Individual Performance Planning and Appraisal (IPPA) in the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service for all bargaining unit employees that shall: provide an appraisal of an employee's performance; provide guidance to the employee in correcting any areas of deficiency as needed; and recognize successful performance.

Section 59.2 Components:

Performance Plan: establishment of performance expectations and developmental action plan at the beginning of each review period.

Performance Management: a supervisor's periodic observation and documentation of performance, on-going feedback, and conduct of progress discussions throughout the review period.

Performance Appraisal: conclusion of the process which includes rating the performance of the employee, providing feedback, and noting progress of the developmental action plan.

Section 59.3 Definitions:

- A. Critical Standards: A performance expectation or standard critical to the competent performance of the essential duties and responsibilities of the position identified in the IPPA. Failure to perform any one critical standard at an acceptable level indicates an overall inability to perform the job and should result in an overall rating of "Does Not Meet Expectations."
- B. Developmental action plan: That portion of the Individual Performance Plan where the immediate supervisor and employee jointly establish goals for employee development when opportunities for improvement and development have been identified.
- C. Immediate supervisor: The individual responsible for assigning and evaluating an employee's work.
- D. Individual performance appraisal: An immediate supervisor's written evaluation of an employee's performance in relation to the critical and other standards in the employee's performance plan. A performance appraisal may be an interim or annual. The appraisal must be documented on the IPPA form.
- E. Interim evaluation: A performance evaluation conducted by a supervisor at a time between the annual performance evaluation to monitor a probationary employee or address a situation where an employee's current job performance is not at an acceptable level of competence.
- F. Overall rating: An overall summary rating in the employee's IPPA that best describes the employee's overall level of performance during the period covered by an IPPA.
- G. Performance plan: That portion of the IPPA that records performance expectations and standards and is the basis for assessment of the employee's work performance.
- H. Performance standard: is a written description of the quantity, quality, and characteristics of the job, the type of work to be performed, skill or knowledge to be demonstrated, or the results that the employee is expected to accomplish.
- I. Progress discussion: An immediate supervisor's periodic oral or written assessment of an employee's performance in relation to the expectations in the performance plan.

- J. Reviewing official: A Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief, or other high-ranking designee responsible for reviewing the appraisal and ensuring that appropriate performance appraisal planning and appraisal procedures were followed by the employee's immediate supervisor. A reviewing official should help resolve disagreements between the supervisor and employee on the plan or appraisal.
- K. Work Improvement Plan: A written plan developed with the employee to outline specific performance problems and or reoccurring deficiencies, required corrective actions to be taken by the employee and/or required performance to be demonstrated by a specified date. The plan may also identify the types of assistance, if applicable, to be provided by the immediate supervisor.

Section 59.4 Policy:

- A. The IPPA process is directed toward accomplishing the following objectives:
 - 1. provide direct feedback to the employee regarding work performance over the review period;
 - 2. assist the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Services (MCFRS) in identifying employees who demonstrate an interest and are capable and willing to assume greater responsibilities;
 - 3. identify employees with substandard work performance;
 - 4. establish a plan of action for employees requiring work performance improvement;
 - 5. develop action plans for professional development;
 - 6. recognize extraordinary performance; and
 - 7. provide documentation of an employee's work performance.
- B. IPPA reviews should be considered for merit increases, promotions, performance awards, demotions, dismissal, termination, or other adverse actions involving performance problems.
- C. The IPPA process is separate and distinct from the disciplinary process as defined in the collective bargaining agreement. The IPPA process does not replace, impede, or prevent the application or progression of the disciplinary process.
- D. Whenever an employee's overall performance rating does not meet expectations, a Work Improvement Plan must be established.

Section 59.5 Responsibility:

- A. The Chief, MCFRS must maintain a formal procedure ensuring timely submission of IPPA forms.
- B. IPPA is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor and includes:
 - 1. reviewing and developing performance standards for an employee at the beginning of a review period;
 - 2. ongoing monitoring of the employee's performance with periodic oral or written feedback, coaching, training, or other action to enhance performance;
 - 3. conducting periodic progress discussions, preparing interim evaluations as needed, and developing plans to improve employee performance as needed; and rating an employee on the performance standards and awarding an overall rating.
- C. IPPA signature authority will be limited to Assistant Chiefs, Battalion Chiefs, Captains, and Lieutenants. Other individuals with supervisory responsibilities may be required to provide input.

Section 59.6 Procedure:

A. Review period.

1. The review period covered by the IPPA must be a minimum of four months and not exceed 12 months.
2. The annual review period will be linked to the employee's increment date or the anniversary of the employee's hire date if the employee does not receive increments.

B. Substance of a performance plan.

1. A performance plan must be established within 30 days after an employee attains merit status, begins work in a new position, or begins a new annual review period.
2. Each performance plan must state the performance expectations and standards for the employee during the review period. Performance expectations and standards should describe, at a minimum, the performance level of "Meet Expectations" in terms that allow reasonably objective appraisal. Additional information on performance above and below this rating may be provided as guidance.
3. An IPPA must be consistent with MCFRS work programs and class specifications.
4. Performance standards designated as critical elements, essential to the competent performance of the position, must be explicitly identified in the performance plan.
5. The developmental action plan must include goals to address any single performance standard(s) previously rated at the "Does Not Meet Expectation" level and be reviewed in four months.

C. Performance planning process.

1. If the employee refuses to sign the performance plan, the immediate supervisor must note on the plan that the employee saw the plan but refused to sign it.
2. An immediate supervisor must give an employee a copy of the employee's performance plan within 14 calendar days after the plan is established or revised.

D. Performance appraisal.

1. If more than one individual supervises an employee, each should participate in the performance appraisal and award of ratings. The supervisors should share this responsibility in a manner consistent with their roles in directing the employee's work. Only supervisors who have directed some aspect of the employee's work or have first-hand knowledge or documentation of the employee's performance during the review period may participate in evaluating and/or rating the employees' performance.
2. If the employee has worked for a supervisor for six months or more, the current supervisor must complete the appraisal instrument as required.
3. If an employee has worked for a supervisor for less than six months, the current supervisor should consult with the previous supervisor in order to provide a proper assessment of the employee.
5. Supervisors may utilize supplemental information from other sources based on the employee's work assignment.

E. Frequency and timing of performance appraisal.

1. An immediate supervisor must give each subordinate employee at least one written performance appraisal in every 12-month period within 30 days of the end of the review period.
2. An interim appraisal may be conducted for an employee who has been working under an IPPA for a minimum of four months. Examples of the situations where an interim appraisal may be warranted include, but are not limited to, change of supervisor, significant duty changes, and to document changes in performance. If an immediate supervisor conducts an interim appraisal, he or she must also conduct an annual evaluation for the employee at the appropriate time. With the exception of timing and re-establishment of a performance plan, all of the procedures for conducting an annual appraisal apply.
3. Developmental action plan goals established to improve performance for performance expectations rated as "Does Not Meet Expectations" on the previous performance appraisal must be reviewed periodically. If insufficient progress has been demonstrated, the supervisor should conduct a formal interim evaluation.

F. Substance of performance appraisals.

1. An immediate supervisor must rate each applicable performance expectation and standard established in the performance plan.
2. An immediate supervisor must include a written summary supporting the employee's overall performance rating. This should include supporting documentation and comments about the employee's actual performance.
3. Any employee who is rated "Does Not Meet Expectations" must have specific examples described in the narrative component of the assessment instrument explaining the basis for the rating.
4. Documentation of performance deficiencies may include, but not be limited to, an annual or interim performance appraisal.
5. The immediate supervisor should note accomplishment or progress toward a developmental action plan goal on the performance appraisal as appropriate.

G. Performance rating. The immediate supervisor must rate an employee using one of the following four categories as indicated below:

1. Exceptional: This rating applies to performance that constantly exceeds the requirements identified in the performance standard outlined in the IPPA. A bargaining unit member who is rated "Exceptional" overall was rated "Exceptional" on the majority of performance requirements.
2. Above Expectation: This rating applies to performance that has met, and exceeds the requirements of the performance standard outlined in the IPPA. A bargaining unit member who is rated "Above Expectations" overall, was rated "Above Expectations" on the majority of performance requirements.
3. Meets Expectations: This rating applies to performance that has met the basic requirements of the performance standard outlined in the IPPA. A bargaining unit employee who is rated "Meets Expectations" was rated "Meets Expectations" on the majority of performance requirements.
4. Does Not Meet Expectations: This rating applies to performance that has not met the basic requirements of the performance standards outlined in the IPPA. A bargaining unit member who is rated "Does Not Meet Expectations" was rated "Does Not Meet Expectations" on the majority of performance requirements. An overall rating at the Does Not Meet Expectations level will result in establishment of a Work Improvement Plan.

H. Performance appraisal procedures.

1. An employee may submit information to the immediate supervisor for consideration prior to assessment. Employees are encouraged to complete a self-assessment using the IPPA evaluation tool.
2. The immediate supervisor must submit all assessments to the reviewing official prior to presenting the rating to the employee.
3. The reviewing official must ensure that appraisal is consistent with this procedure; and the overall rating is consistent with the individual elements of the plan.
4. An immediate supervisor must review and discuss the performance appraisal with the employee.
5. If an employee refuses to sign a performance appraisal, the appraisal must be referred to the reviewing official. The reviewing official must review the appraisal and consult with the employee and supervisor to determine why the employee refused to sign the appraisal. If the employee still refuses to sign the appraisal after this consultation, the supervisor must note on the appraisal that the employee saw the appraisal but refused to sign it.
6. Upon completion of the review with the employee, the performance appraisal will be forwarded through the chain of command to the employee's Battalion Chief to be filed. Assessments with an overall rating of "Exceptional" or "Does Not Meet Expectations" should be forwarded to the employee's Division Chief via the chain of command.
7. One copy of the appraisal must be given to the employee within 30 days of completion.

Section 59.7 Work Improvement Plan Procedures:

- A. Prior to taking a performance-based personnel action, the employee must be:
1. Informed in writing of the problem;
 2. Counseled as to what corrective action to take; and
 3. Allowed an adequate and specific time-frame to improve or correct the performance deficiency.
 4. The immediate supervisor must also inform the employee that unless the employee's performance improves and is sustained at an acceptable level, the employee may be reassigned, demoted or terminated.
 5. The Work Improvement Plan must be submitted to the reviewing official prior to being reviewed with the employee.
 6. The Work Improvement Plan must be submitted to the Bureau Chief via the chain of command after being reviewed with the employee.

Section 59.8 Retention Of Performance Appraisals:

- A. Performance appraisals must be kept in an employee's official record for 5 years.
- A. Performance appraisals and supporting documentation may be kept in a departmental operating file for 5 years.
- B. One copy must be kept in the supervisory file for a period of one year.
- C. All electronic versions of the form must be safeguarded to protect unauthorized viewing.
- D. A finalized IPPA with signatures must be maintained.

E. Section 59.9 Appeal

The substance of an IPPA must not be the subject of a grievance. Grievances must be consistent with Article 38, Contract Grievance Procedures.

Section 59.10 IPPA Instrument Format:

- A. All final PPA Forms must minimally include the following:
 - 1. Employee name
 - 2. Employee ID number
 - 3. Job title/rank
 - 4. Station/shift
 - 5. Supervisor name
 - 6. Review period beginning and ending dates
 - 7. List or indication of additional feedback sources/supplied by: e.g. EMS quality assurance surveys, medical staff, and feedback from residents
 - 8. Signatures (including electronic substitutes) from supervisor and employee (as applicable) to establish plan
 - 9. Signatures (including electronic substitutes) to document progress discussion (as applicable)
 - 10. Signatures (including electronic substitutes) from supervisor and employee to finalize performance appraisal
 - 11. Signature of the reviewing official
 - 12. List of performance expectations, ratings and narrative comments
 - 13. Developmental action plan (as applicable)
 - 14. Overall rating
 - 15. Employee comments (as applicable)