



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures – 1.17 Community Complaint



CUSTOMER COMPLAINT

Effective: June 9, 2023
 Scheduled Review: June 9, 2026
 Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a standard system to respond promptly, courteously, and positively to all complaints. This procedure compliments and does not alter any of the disciplinary action articles of the department’s two collective bargaining agreements.

II. CUSTOMERS

The fire department responds on over 10,000 incidents annually. Most of these incidents may seem routine to us, but for the person who called, it is not routine. As professionals we will provide excellent customer service on each and every call, to each and every customer.

The customer is any person who receives our services and anyone with who our employees have dealings. Examples of this definition include:

- The actual service recipient
- Anyone who knows or is closely related to the service recipient, e.g., family, friends, neighbors.
- The people we encounter, directly and indirectly during our workday, e.g., members of organizations we routinely do business with, people who visit our workplace, people who see us during our workday, and people who see us on the road.
- The members of our organization including support staff (our customer services begin with how we treat each other)

These customers are an integral part of our workday. We will treat them in a positive way and include them in our plan to execute excellent customer service. Every interaction with our customers is an opportunity to solve their problem and leave a positive, lasting impression.

III. CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Customer complaints pertaining to any aspect of our operations, service delivery, or that allege employee misconduct shall be documented and investigated. All complaints shall be accepted in a courteous, understanding, and professional manner.

Complaints will be received in any form, e.g., in person, via telephone, email, social media accounts, forwarded via elected official.

Anonymous complaints or complaints from someone refusing to identify themselves will be accepted for review. However, those offering anonymous complaints will be advised that our ability to investigate the complaint may be limited by their anonymity.

Complaints shall be forwarded to the assistant chief whose area of responsibility or employee(s) the complaint falls within.



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If there is doubt, the complaint shall be forwarded to the fire chief. When possible, the assistant chief will inform the fire chief of all received complaints within one (1) business day; this should not exceed two (2) business days.

Upon the assistant chief or fire chief gathering initial information, a notice of investigation may be issued to involved employees who are covered under a collective bargaining agreement. Investigation and / or potential disciplinary action will be handled via the processes outlined in the collective bargaining agreement.

An assistant chief or the fire chief will communicate with the customer the status of any investigation and outcome. Any specifics on discipline or other human resource action taken is unable to be shared with the complainant.

IV. COMPLAINTS REFERENCE PROVISION OF MEDICAL CARE

The Washtenaw / Livingston Medical Control Authority (WLMCA) will be forwarded complaints referencing the provision of patient care by a licensed healthcare provider. Patient care complaints will be addressed via WLMCA protocols including: [8-7\(s\) Incident Classification](#).

Any parallel investigation and / or potential disciplinary action will be handled via the processes outlined in the respective collective bargaining agreement.

V. RESPONDING TO THE COMPLAINT

The below guidance is from *Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service* by Alan Brunacini when responding to a customer complaint.

- Do whatever is necessary to stabilize the situation.
- Quickly (one business day or less) contact the person who complained.
 - Inform the person we have received their complaint.
 - We are investigating.
 - We will recontact them.
 - Obtain any additional information they have (listen).
- Find out what actually happened.
 - Listen to all participants.
 - Do not be defensive.
 - Do not decide anything until you have heard everyone's story.
- If we screwed up, develop a basic plan.
 - First recover from the event that caused the complaint.
 - Develop a plan that fixes the problem so that it does not happen again.
 - Use the regular in-place management / operational system whenever possible to help solve the problem.
- Contact the customer.
 - Tell them we screwed up.
 - Tell them we are sorry (apologize).
 - Determine if we can do something that makes them feel better.



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- Describe the plan to fix the problem.
- Use the participants, as much as possible within the collective bargaining agreement, to develop the solution that will prevent the problem from occurring again – focus on fixing the problem, not assigning blame.
- Many times complaints / screw-ups create well-disguised opportunities.