STATE OF MICHIGAN
GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
LANSING

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DIRECTOR

Memorandum

DATE: April 25, 2019

TO: Michigan Fire Instructors

FROM: Kevin J. Sehlmeyer, State Fire Marshal/Director

SUBJECT: Instructor Expectations

The purpose of this memo is to address a few issues that have been brought to my attention concerning fire instructors teaching in Michigan. I continue to receive emails and phone calls where I am asked questions about continuity of fire instruction during meetings and townhall events.

First, let me start off by saying we have many excellent fire instructors that are doing a great job across our state. I would like to thank those fire instructors for their professionalism, passion and mastery of the topic(s) they teach. They are doing a great job sharing their knowledge while developing firefighters, fire instructors, fire officers and chief officers.

While I believe most of our instructors are doing a great job statewide, I have been challenged by the fire service to address certain issues. Specifically, I've been told that some of our fire instructors are not being professional, and in some cases, clearly do not have the knowledge, passion or mastery for the topic(s) they are teaching.

The following are some examples of the feedback from students who want to learn:

- "The students take time away from their family, their job and travel, in some cases, a great distance to learn and they expect a knowledgeable fire instructor."
- "The students attend because they want to learn and don't mind being in class the whole time. They don't like it when you skip parts or tell them they do not need to know [certain sections of the textbook or the student manual]."
- "The students expect the instructor to be fair and inclusive. They want real world ideas, solutions, and concepts however; they don't want to hear long war stories."
- "They don't want a fire instructor that is not up to speed on the modern fire science concepts and tactics. They know that with modern fire loads, the fire

service must evolve, and they welcome this change."
- "The students do not want an instructor who tells the students that they will get information in another course, or "you should know that, so we won't be covering that information."

I feel that right now is the right time to provide some clarification on what is expected in the classroom from all instructors in Michigan.

Each National Fire Academy (NFA) course is developed for you to teach all the information outlined in the course and it is expected that you teach the entire course. Don't assume that a student knows a topic. You are shortcutting their learning experience and this needs to cease.

The NFA programs are also designed with multiple scenarios to reinforce learning across many topics and sub-topics during a course. Your role as the instructor is to facilitate discussion on every topic and this includes completing every student activity, regardless of the number of students or your geographical location. Often the greatest learning occurs when each group reports out on their scenario and it is your job to facilitate and add or support information to enhance the learning process while supporting the objectives of the course. By skipping scenarios within the student manual, you are not facilitating the whole course. This practice is unacceptable.

Another common complaint from students is that their instructor has shared during an NFA or Firefighter I, and Firefighter I & II course that "we don't run those type of incidents" or "we don't have those type of buildings, so we are not going to cover that chapter or topic". This practice is unacceptable and needs to cease. Instructors are expected to teach the whole course. The instructor manual provides appropriate responses and provides guidance on what instructors are expected to cover.

I have also been told many times that instructors are cutting corners while delivering Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council approved curriculum. If you feel as an instructor that you don't like the curriculum or that you can skip parts of a course, please do the students a favor and stop teaching these courses.

Students have also complained that instructors have required them to sign training rosters when, in some cases, the course did not meet on the date indicated on the roster. Please complete a training roster each time a course meets. Having the students pre-sign the rosters at the beginning of a course is unacceptable. The students should be signing the roster as each course session ends. You are required to follow the IGAM and Bureau of Fire Services policies, procedures and memos each year. By accepting the memorandum of understanding (MOU) in the SMOKE system annually, you accept the terms and agree to follow the requirements.

The bottom line is that the students want to learn. They want to be taught and they want you to work with them on their practical skills, to not just pass the state test. They want you to point them towards mastery for a long successful fire service experience.

For those of you who are already doing these things, keep up the great work and keep sharing your knowledge. For those of you cutting corners, please stop immediately. I also ask that you focus your energy on mastery and to expand your craft as a fire service instructor.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your region coordinator. Be safe!

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