MERIDIAN FIRE DEPARTMENT ETHOS
Published by the Meridian Fire Department
Second Edition May 2023
Meridian Fire Department
Meridian, Idaho
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“Local 4627 is united in our efforts to protect and to enhance our organization’s capabilities; guarding our membership, to facilitate the highest level of internal and external customer service, as we strive to make a difference for the citizens of Meridian.”
Meridian Fire Department formed its first fire department in early 1908 after a group of volunteers successfully tested a newly purchased Champion double-cylinder, chemical fire extinguisher. With LeRoy Adams as Meridian’s first Fire Chief, the volunteer fire department’s initial size was small, with crews only serving around 600 residents.

By 1911, Jacob Eames, a local blacksmith took over as Meridian’s second Fire Chief. At this time, a new fire bell was purchased. Costing the city $52.50, the bell weighed 550 pounds, was 36” tall and made from cast steel. It was rung directly from the central telephone station switchboard. Eventually this bell was retired, finding its new home ringing in touchdowns at Meridian High School football games. The bell was found underneath the high school bleachers in 2010 and was returned to its original owners; the Meridian Fire Department. It was restored and dedicated on September 11, 2011, the bell’s 100th year anniversary and the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

Meridian purchased a new fire truck in 1911 and was fully equipped with two 35-gallon chemical tanks, 100 feet of chemical hose, 1200 feet of fire hose, a siren whistle, the latest type flash light, new nozzles, and gas masks. The total purchase price at the time was $1,200, which would be the equivalent of $36,921.60 in 2022.
In approximately 1924, Amos Whiteley, another local blacksmith and skilled mechanic too, took over the position of fire chief, followed by Ira Vorhees in 1936, and Roger Welker in 1945. Chief Welker remained Chief until 1983, dedicating 38 years to the Meridian Fire Department. In the early 1950’s, a partnership was formed with the Rural Fire Protection District to better serve and protect citizens in the city limits and the rural area. A decision was made to jointly fund and house all fire equipment in one station located at the center of the district. The partnership between the city of Meridian and the Meridian Rural Fire Protection District proved beneficial and is still in place today.

Meridian Fire remained a volunteer fire department until 1977 when the first full-time employee, Ray “Skip” Voss was hired.

In late 1983, Kenny Bowers became Meridian Fire’s sixth fire chief. He served in a part time capacity until 1992, when the fire chief position was transitioned to full time. Chief Bowers helped build out the initial infrastructure of Meridian Fire’s Command Staff.

- 1999: The department’s need for an Assistant Chief of Training and Operations was filled by Joe Silva.
- 2000: The need for an administrative secretary was established and filled by Greta Seals.
During this time, Meridian Fire Department expanded, building three new fire stations bringing three new apparatuses to the city. Chief Bowers was instrumental in starting the Thermal Imaging Program, the Defibrillator Program, and establishing Meridian Fire’s first Fire Safety Center which opened in 2005. Meridian Fire also began its partnership with Ada County Paramedics, co locating an ambulance at Meridian Fire Station 2 in order to improve response times to that area of the city.

Chief Anderson accepted the position of fire chief for the City of Meridian in April of 2005. Under his direction, Meridian Fire was successful in adding a paramedic engine company program to the department. He oversaw the completion of two new fire stations and a state-of-the-art Training Tower located at Meridian Fire Station One. The department also acquired its first Aerial Ladder Truck.

Chief Anderson retired in April of 2010 and the Department’s Deputy Chief of EMS, Mark Niemeyer, was promoted to Fire Chief. Chief Niemeyer oversaw the formation of the EMS Joint Powers Agreement and the approval and build of Meridian’s state of the art multi agency Public Safety Training Center. Chief Niemeyer left the department in November of 2020 and Kris Blume was appointed Fire Chief in early 2021.
As of 2021 the department runs on a $15.5 million-dollar budget. There are currently six stations, a training tower, and the Meridian Public Safety Training Center within the district, six first response engines and Meridian’s newest aerial ladder truck. Meridian has recently broke ground on an additional two (2) fire stations: one in Southeast Meridian and one in North Meridian. The Department employs a total of 93 employees, and currently responds to over 7,800 calls per year.
Many things have changed in the Fire Department culture from its inception in 1908. Advancements in technology, changes in firefighting strategies and tactics, evolving firehouse culture, emerging views on the importance of firefighter health and fitness, new EMS deployment strategies, and the embracing of social media are only a few significant differences affecting members of our fire service. The Meridian Fire Department continues to advance with the times in order to better serve the community of Meridian and the members of this department. This second edition of Meridian Fire Department Ethos aims to remind members of the MFD that our stable foundation is built upon core principles that never change.
Members have the right to be treated with honesty, truthfulness, and respect.

Members have the right to express, in a respectful and professional manner, their ideas and opinions.

Members have the right to expect that authority will be proportionate with the responsibility of the position they hold.

Members have the right to expect and receive support for their judgement and decisions when made in an effort to perform their duties; supporting a mission driven culture.

Members have the right, without fear of retribution, to respectfully agree to disagree with the decisions and opinions of leadership, with the understanding that orders will always be carried out in a professional manner.

Members have the right to develop skills and abilities to achieve career goals in an atmosphere of equality and impartiality.

Members have the right to help create and enjoy the visions and values as the department defines them.
You now own a part of a community and a responsibility. Remember the weight of your badge and the life you’ve taken the oath to save. You need to earn it.
You are recognized as a firefighter. You must face the responsibility that comes with it. Live it, every day.
Individuals employed by the Meridian Fire Department are more than employees; they are part of a family. A family does not have employees, a family has members. A family promotes teamwork, innovation and compassion. When making value-based decisions ask yourself:

- Is it the right thing for the citizen?
- Is it the right thing for the department?
- Is it legal, ethical and kind?
- Is it safe?
- Is it on your organizational level?
- Is it something you are willing to be accountable for?
- Is it consistent with our guiding principles, polices, and guidelines?
Mission Statement
“To Protect and Enhance our Community Through Professionalism and Compassion”

Every member of the MFD should know our mission by heart; for it is the very essence of our existence.

Judgments, decisions, policies and practices should always reflect Our Mission.
What Makes a Good Teammate?

The goal of the Meridian Fire Department is to recruit, develop, and retain exceptional members. There should be a very clear understanding of what constitutes a good member and teammate. Good members are team players who have a positive attitude towards themselves, the MFD, and the community we have the privilege of serving. They help other members succeed through encouragement and motivation. They are responsible, competent, and confident. Good teammates are always learning, developing, and improving. They support responsible leadership and do whatever they can to ensure the well-being of their fellow members. Good members want to be involved in MFD events and do not “abuse the system” to meet their own agendas. Most importantly, teammates:

- Are walking, talking, gracious public relations agents, on-duty or off duty, representing not only the MFD but all emergency service professionals everywhere.
- Understand that a reassuring smile and a kind word will go a long way toward building a foundation for interaction with the public and other MFD members.
- Understand and accept their responsibility for the accomplishment of the MFD mission and always leave the community and membership better than they found it.
True commitment includes making a personal commitment to all members of the department and the citizens of the City of Meridian. This commitment promises that our best efforts will be the standard of performance at all times. True commitment is never accepting or perpetuating a “good enough for government work” attitude; however, it does include assuming personal responsibility and never walking past a problem. This commitment includes loyalty to the organization and dedication to the fire service craft.

Each member of the MFD shares responsibility for creating and maintaining an effective organizational culture and an exceptional fire department. This requires continual personal development through education, innovation, training, and self-initiative. Seek a mentor, and find opportunities to mentor others from the organization. It is important to remember:

- The caliber of the organization is directly related to the extent of each individual member’s personal commitment to it.
- Personal commitment often means personal sacrifice.
Respect is founded upon the “Golden Rule”: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Mutual respect will be the standard of interpersonal dynamics demonstrated by members of the Meridian Fire Department. Mutual respect includes allowing room for differences to be understood and personal values to be accepted. It includes agreeing to disagree on a professional level attempting to be fair in all decisions and interactions, and mediating personal problems among peers whenever possible.

Disrespectful conduct of any kind has no place in our organization. It is important to allow disagreements without damage and remember the welfare of others as you would your own. It is also important to show respect for yourself through your appearance, attitude and competency. Respect is:

- Striving to understand other members’ perspectives.
- Not allowing or participating in, harassment or discrimination of any kind. Never degrading or diminishing the worth of others.
As we continue to move forward and into the future together, I feel it important for me to share with each member of the Meridian Fire Department, one of my long-term visions and ethos for our organization. Specifically, our becoming a more Mission-Driven Culture.

Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) describes a set of principles for operating successfully despite friction, danger, and uncertainty. It defines key values and attitudes that generate cohesive and adaptive action and strengthening resilience in times of uncertainty. These values—as we have outlined in this booklet—include the aggressive pursuit of truth, as well as communicating intent to promote decision making and initiative among those in the field.

As fire service professionals, performance is an outgrowth of the behaviors ingrained during training and day-to-day operations. Subconsciously rooted, these embedded habits are the foundation for action, particularly under stress. The same tenets apply to developing leadership ability. The results are seen in the day-to-day operations long before being tested in the field under extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, the evolution of culture necessarily starts here at Meridian Fire Department.

The “rules-based” operational paradigm that we and most fire service agencies embody illustrates a culture of permission-asking, one that reserves decision-making for the highest levels. Within this type of culture, firefighters are seldom tasked with exercising judgment or initiative, even though they are typically the ones with the most accurate picture of circumstances and the best awareness of what can or cannot be done.
This challenge is not an individual training problem; it is a culture one. Polices and procedures are important and can aid decision-making by applying the expertise and experience of others in standard situations; however, they are of little help—and can even be a hinderance—when dealing with ambiguous or extreme situations. In these circumstances, rules fall by the wayside, leaving decisions and action to be centered on individual beliefs, attitudes and values.

Organizations shape their operational culture partly through doctrine but mostly through the influence of their leaders. At all levels, leaders establish, guard and reinforce day-to-day cultural norms and serve as a critical foundation of the internal accountability system that shapes judgement and behavior. For this reason, strengthening operational culture begins with leaders, especially those closest to operations.
In its application, this model of culture and operations holds responders responsible for acting in accordance with the principles of the organization and the articulated intent rather than for complying with rules or policy. By delegating to the lower levels, it generates faster decision making on the ground and provides a foundation for cohesive action even in rapidly changing or ambiguous circumstances. For these reasons, we will be focusing our attention on leadership and cultural development.

It is important to remember the sole purpose of Mission-Driven Culture and its intent-based, planning command system—and the specific tool of leader’s intent—is to lower the risk to the operators and the organization, and to increase the probability of success. Simply put, lower the odds of bad things happening and increase the opportunity of good things happening. All other benefits, while significant to the organization, are secondary to that core purpose.

As the Meridian Fire Department transitions toward a MDC we must articulate and expect our members to exhibit leader’s intent. A leader’s intent incorporates task, purpose, and end state. Task represents the objective and goals of the mission. The purpose is the why of a task or assignment (i.e., why the mission must be undertaken).

Finally, there is the end state, which is how the situation should look after completing the mission. By ensuring leader’s intent, our
department can ensure the best results from Mission-Driven Culture and all benefits gained from it. Combining the agility, adaptability, and cohesion of small teams with the power and resources of a large organization is a force multiplier quality of our cohesion, adaptiveness and resilience is chiefly determined by the strength of our culture. The MDC is an articulation of this operational vision and end state.

Developing a common belief system and supporting doctrine that advances concentric attitudes and behaviors will require a long-term commitment and substantial focus by all members of the Meridian Fire Department. Over the upcoming years, I look forward to the groundwork, evolution, and outcomes of this initiative.

-Fire Chief Kris Blume
The Meridian Way means:

- Providing service in a caring and professional manner while exceeding expectations.
- Treating all customers, our community, with dignity and respect—Even those who have no respect for themselves.
- Understanding the quality of the job you perform is a reflection on the entire Department, the profession, and the City of Meridian.

We take great pride in our work with our citizens and our ability to come together with local government and organizations to help Meridian continued to be recognized as one of the best communities to raise a family in the United States.

We believe this is achieved through our CARE Values:

Providing the best Customer Service to our community, colleagues, and partners by listening and responding in a timely, friendly, professional, and solution-oriented manner.

Exemplifying Accountability by understanding our role in the organization, knowing our jobs, and accepting that each of us is responsible for our own work, choices, and actions. Acting as stewards of the community's resources, our environment, and our relationships.

Showing Respect by being trustworthy and courteous. We honor, accept, and include people with diverse opinions and backgrounds.

Demonstrating continual Excellence through professionalism, going beyond the parameters of our job while being creative, innovative, flexible, and adaptable to multiple needs.
The Meridian Fire Department will never be content with mediocrity. We pride ourselves in excellence; to the profession and our community. When a customer calls 911, they expect:

- A timely response.
- Competent professionals to fix their problem.
- To be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect throughout the event.

These points are only where we begin to achieve our desired level of customer service and demonstrate “The Meridian Way”.

Members should first assess each situation, determine what the citizen expects, and finally, exceed those expectations before the interaction with the customer is concluded. When defining this level of customer service, such a response is often referred to as the “wow” factor. Envision that each time you drive away from an incident, our customer is looking at the back of your unit and thinking, “Wow! More than I ever expected.

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Awesome crew - kept me calm and took good care of me. Thanks!

Our inspector is always so friendly and accommodates our unusual schedule. Thank you!

Fabulous! Fast and kind. Thank you MFD!

Wonderful men and women. Thank you!

I really appreciated the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff. You went out of your way to help me. Thank you!

Prompt, professional, efficient. Everything that a fire department should be!

Very friendly, informative and competent. Thank you.

Could not have been nicer! They were all very courteous, patient and kind! Thanks!

Customer Comments 2020
We should never respond to our customers as though we are the only show in town...one day, we may not be. We want our citizens, our customers, fighting for their Fire Department when the need arises.

Members of the MFD can achieve a high level of customer satisfaction by making decisions based on the MFD mission and Guiding Principles and providing a timely response to every request for service. Members should take ownership of a customer’s problem and manage it to a successful outcome even if it is not their area of responsibility. Members should answer every question our customers ask either by providing the appropriate answer or by providing a referral to the appropriate agency. In the event of a complaint or a negative customer service experience, from either an internal or external customer, the MFD will provide a serious review, correct all conduct and performance not in line with the values of the MFD.

Members should make every public contact a positive one and use every opportunity to promote positive public relations and public education. This is accomplished by providing service, care and attention beyond the patient with injury or illness; remembering that family and friends are often secondary patients needing emotional support. Additionally, we do this by showing respect for others’ property during all operations by minimizing damage and conducting effective salvage operations.

We must also remember in the era of social media and instant access to information by way of cellphones, security and police cameras, our actions and interactions are on display more than ever. Our customers record our activities on a regular basis and have social media accounts where they post pictures for friends, family and the public to see. As a member the MFD, it is good to remember to make every interaction a positive one. A firefighter is never seen as being “off duty” in the eyes of the community.
Change will always be a part of the way the Meridian Fire Department conducts business. Without it, the organization will quickly become anemic and eventually die. But change within the Department will always occur in a calculated, incremental manner, with organizational improvement as its primary focus. Traditions are not always bad, however, we must be willing to eliminate those that no longer serve a useful purpose. As our City continues to grow, change will follow. We must anticipate future demands and adapt in a pro-active manner.

The Meridian Fire Department will manage change by choosing paths predicated on evidenced based decisions, using both historical information and empirical data. The members and stakeholders affected by these changes will receive progress reports and positive reinforcement whenever possible regarding the effectiveness of change. Participation of the membership in the process, specifically by providing information and feedback, is always encouraged. Members of MFD should:

- Accept training and education as necessary tools for improvements in life safety and efficiency.
- Be flexible and willing to experience the discomfort often associated with change.
Considering most of our membership live and work together for 48-hour shifts, it is necessary to foster a positive and pleasant work environment. One of the most rewarding aspects of our profession is the camaraderie, the brotherhood and sisterhood, that is the hallmark of the fire service culture. It is everyone’s responsibility to foster positive morale and to make our work environment as rewarding as possible. While attitude and emotions are the sole responsibility of each individual, the environment should be such that those so inclined can enjoy their work, or even as audacious as it might sound, have fun at work!

A pleasant work environment allows for personal privacy and time alone to collect one’s thoughts; it’s conducive to self-growth, self improvement and self-development. It allows for participation in the decision-making process and focuses on productive work rather than busy work. It promotes inclusion and individualism, as well as esprit de corps among the crew and teams. Most importantly, a positive work environment:

- Provides a sense of belonging to the group.
- Emphasizes personal safety, free from risk and hazard.
- It is an environment without intimidation or harassment of any kind.
Surround yourself with people who take their work seriously, but not themselves.

- General Colin Powell
The Meridian Fire Department intentionally strives to be a “values driven” rather than “policy-driven” department. This is the foundation and principle behind the Mission-Driven Culture initiative. While we recognize that rules, regulations and operational doctrine must have their place in a paramilitary organization, not every situation or circumstances can be accounted for in writing, in policy or in a manual. Many decisions will have to be made using the leaders’ intent leveraged on the values of the Department.

In an organization the size of the Meridian Fire Department, measures must be in place to maintain performance expectations. Whenever levels of job performance or personal conduct fall below these levels, corrective action must be taken to maintain the integrity of the organization, as well as the trust and confidence of the public. Such corrective action might include coaching, counseling, remedial training, or formal disciplinary action.

When administered, formal discipline will always be viewed as a corrective action, rather than a punishment. In almost every case, formal, corrective intervention from the supervisory or operations level can be prevented by exercising self-discipline at the individual level. Self-discipline means doing the right thing even when circumstances make it easier to do otherwise.

The proper handling of all corrective measures, including formal disciplinary action should include:

- Exercising the philosophy of “second-chance management”, except in the cases of personal negligence, blatant disregard or a serious violation of policy. That is, to be honest about a mistake, and then grow and learn from them in a productive manner.
- Maintain confidentiality about the case.
- Administering any formal disciplinary action in accordance with the Comprehensive Labor Agreement, City Policy and Departmental policies.
The Meridian Fire Department’s philosophy with regard to its retirees is “Once a member, always a member”. It is important for all of us to remember that those who came before us, paved the way for all of us. They did it under far less desirable working conditions—more hours, less pay, an absence of current technology, and with too little attention to life safety.

Our retirees have literally given most of their adult lives to this profession in the service of others. Their heartfelt commitment to their chosen profession does not end with their last paycheck. The Meridian Fire Department will make every effort to ensure they are provided opportunities to feel that their continued participation is needed and appreciated by the MFD family. Members can do this by introducing retirees to newer members of MFD when the occasion presents itself. Members can also treat retirees with dignity and respect by using their rank or title in the presence of other members. Remember, we too, will one day join their ranks. Our philosophy toward our MFD retirees:

- Making our retirees know they are always welcome at any Meridian Fire Department station or event.
- Creating opportunities for retirees to remain connected to their Department with an ability to continue to serve if that is their desire.
- Remembering that a lifetime of knowledge and experience is lost with the departure of each retiree.

To those before us, to those amongst us, to those we will see on the other side. Lord let me not prove unworthy of my brothers.” - Brad Cavner, U.S. Navy
Hard Times

Given enough time, every organization will face a period of hard times. This can come in any form, from a severe financial crisis to a tragedy from within the Department or a natural or man-made disaster. The time to prepare for hard times is before hard times come. Otherwise, the reaction comes too late. As the Meridian Fire Department encounters hard and changing times:

- We will remember that hard times affect not only our members but also our extended family, spouses, parents and children. They should be included in all support efforts.
- We will commit to watching over the family of any MFD member who deploys for active military duty to serve our country.
- We will remember that “This too, shall pass” and we will view tough times as a period of growth, strengthening and self-examination.

“Tough times never last, but tough people do.” —Robert H. Schuller
The moment you only think of serving other people, you begin to have a notion that other people owe you something for your pains; you begin to think that you have a claim on the community. You begin to bargain for reward, to angle for applause, and to harbor a grievance if you are not appreciated. But if your mind is set upon serving the work, then you know you have nothing to look for; the only reward the work can give you is the satisfaction of beholding its perfection.

The work takes all and gives nothing but itself; and to serve the work is a labor of pure love. The only true way of serving the community is to be truly in sympathy with the community, to be oneself part of the community and then to serve the work… It is the work that serves the community, the business of the firefighter is to serve the work.

Becoming fearless isn’t the point. That’s impossible. It’s learning how to control your fear, & how to be free from it, that’s the point. The necessity of action takes away the fear of the act and makes bold resolution the favorite of fortune.”

- Francis Quarles
Phone Numbers

Battalion Chief: 208-565-0809
Station #1: 208-489-0331 540 E. Franklin Rd., 83642
Station #2: 208-489-0332 2401 N. Ten Mile Rd., 83646
Station #3: 208-489-0333 3545 N. Locust Grove, 83646
Station #4: 208-489-0334 2515 S. Eagle Rd., 83642
Station #5: 208-489-0335 6001 N. Linder Rd., 83646
Station #6: 208-489-0336 1435 W. Overland Rd., 83642
Station #7: COMING SOON 2385 E. Lake Hazel Rd., 83642
Station #8: COMING SOON 4250 N. Owyhee Storm Ave., 83646

Fire Admin Office: 208-888-1234 33 E. Broadway Ave. #210, 83642
Fire Safety Center: 208-884-0597 1901 E. Leighfield Dr., 83646
Training Center: 208-895-3332 1223 E. Watertower Ln., 83642 Meridian

Meridian Police Department: 208-888-6678
Public Information Officer: 208-318-4394
Human Resources: 208-898-5503
IT: 208-489-0500
EAP (Employee Assistance Program): 800-726-0003

Notes
AND AS FOR YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, NEVER TIRE OF DOING WHAT IS GOOD.

2 Thessalonians 3:13