

# 50 RULES

## FOR THE SENIOR FIREFIGHTER

- 1** Don't demand recognition for 'what you are prepared to do' when it suits you but claim that 'you're just a firefighter' when you are called to task. You aren't 'just a firefighter', own the breadth of responsibility that comes with the title.
- 2** The title of Senior Firefighter is bestowed upon you out of respect by peers that have witnessed you live up to it on and off the fireground. No one owes you anything.
- 3** There is more expectation on you than any other firefighter. They have the excuse of inexperience. You have none.
- 4** If you are recognized for your work and it is warranted, allow it to happen. Being dignified and humble in your acceptance of praise shows the importance of celebrating wins along the way.
- 5** Experience in one realm of the fire service does not make you the senior firefighter in all areas. If you've barely scratched the surface on a skill or topic, then you are the rookie.
- 6** Seek out opportunities to be the rookie again and spend time around subject matter experts.
- 7** Take the initiative to be self motivated. Show other firefighters that we do the things because they need to be done, not because we always want to do them.
- 8** You are not exempt from all chore duties. The rookies should do their time with certain jobs as you did, but you should pull your weight until retirement.
- 9** You may do fewer menial tasks but that should be balanced with continuous effort to better your crew and department as a whole as an instructor, committee member, and/or agent of necessary change.
- 10** Cook and help prepare meals.
- 11** Be in the same mover rotation as everyone else in your crew.
- 12** Help others to be competent and build their confidence. Both are needed for any firefighter to take action when there isn't time to get permission.
- 13** Pass on everything you can of worth to anyone that is willing to listen; successes and mistakes, especially mistakes.
- 14** Own your mistakes when they happen. Show others that being a firefighter isn't about being perfect, it's about always striving for it in spite of knowing that you will often fall short.
- 15** Know the 'why' behind everything you have knowledge about. Skill without the 'why' is useless.
- 16** Never ask questions of other firefighters with the intent to make them feel lesser than you.
- 17** Don't make up answers. If you don't know, offer to seek it out with them or get back to them with what they need.
- 18** Your fire service knowledge is not your knowledge, you learned it from someone through some medium. Cite your sources. Give credit where credit is due.
- 19** Ensure that those you correct or point out shortfalls to know that you are doing so because you care about them.
- 20** Know the difference between helping and coddling, guiding and hand-holding.
- 21** Make your intent known if you are going to rib/tease. Make others feel included, not alienated.
- 22** Get your physical, spiritual, cognitive, and emotional pillars in order and work to maintain them.
- 23** Prove to others that the best firefighters have learned to integrate compassion, empathy, and gentleness with educated aggressiveness, courage, and brute force. "Do no harm but take no shit." - unknown
- 24** Be the first one to acknowledge the impact of a serious/disturbing call. Model vulnerability and the necessity to process and work through them.
- 25** If you're at your mental and emotional limit, you can't be of service to anyone. Be honest when you are asked for help.

- 26 Find a counselor you connect with. Go see them regularly.
- 27 Be the one who others come to with things they are struggling with. Be the one that they would recommend to others. Never betray the trust that comes with their vulnerability.
- 28 Only show up to work if you are capable of running the biggest call of your career.
- 29 Check all of your gear and the entire apparatus every time you come in.
- 30 Gear up for every call. You can always downgrade.
- 31 Be the calmest person on the apparatus.
- 32 Only step in and take over a task for another firefighter if there are immediate consequences if you don't.
- 33 You have the benefit of working smarter, so you should be able to work harder and longer.
- 34 Work hard, play hard, rest and recover hard.
- 35 Know enough about the ranks immediately above you to support their decisions and desires, and to hold your tongue when necessary.
- 36 Don't freelance just to posture. Know what is in the box and know when to act outside of it.
- 37 If you are trying to promote for the money to 'get out of doing work,' to be in charge, despite not agreeing with the promotional process, or even though you are not ready to be first-due to a house fire with people trapped, you aren't the kind of firefighter that is desirable, let alone someone who should lead them.
- 38 Rookies don't need specialty rescue training. Drill the fundamentals, you need it too.
- 39 If you can get out and actually drill the skill, don't fall back on the ease of just talking it through.
- 40 Step up first when it's drill time. Don't let others take the fall so you can refresh and perform like it was effortless. If you fall short, model humility and perseverance.
- 41 If you are going to read up to refresh on a topic before you teach it, be transparent about it.
- 42 Most rookies are going to bring something to the table that you can learn and grow from. Have conversations, listen well and often.
- 43 It's not a rookie's fault that they have the benefits of youth, time, and opportunity that you may have squandered. Be honest with yourself. Your dislike might be a cover for envy.
- 44 Don't steal days of other people's careers. Be surgically discriminate between trying to impart wisdom and trying to jade someone as you commiserate. There are things that you can't fast-track people through, they are going to have to experience them in their own time and in their own way. Be there for them when they do.
- 45 Your fire department isn't a dating app. Firefighters on shift have no choice whether they work or spend time with you. New firefighters are especially vulnerable because they want to be liked/fit in/be accepted. Just because you have access to them 7 times a month for 24 hours doesn't mean they would give you the time of day in any other environment. Be a professional, mentor, and support. Help new firefighters feel like they belong, and leave your needy ego out of it.
- 46 Strive to align your department to fight fires as a unit.
- 47 If you bring forward a problem, make sure you have suggestions for a solution.
- 48 Ensure that the opinions and perspectives that you express with others are educated, balanced, nuanced, and helpful. The fire station isn't your soapbox.
- 49 Give everyone and anyone 100% of your respect from the moment you meet them. They should only have the opportunity to lose it from there.
- 50 "Everyone's a gangster until it's time to do gangster shit." - Tony Soprano



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