




OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR/FIRE CHIEF

March 06, 2013

INSTRUCTIONAL BULLETIN: # 13-12

TO: All Fire and Rescue Personnel
FROM: Martin L. Senterfitt, Director/Fire Chief 
SUBJECT: **Conduct - Scene of Emergency**

The Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department is filled with committed, compassionate employees who have dedicated their lives to the service of this community. Day in and day out we respond to tragedy, and with our very presence, we stabilize the situation and bring peace of mind to those suffering.

Recently, however, I have witnessed a disturbing trend of behavior that incites anger and gives the perception that the JFRD is callous, uncaring, and perhaps to some degree, inefficient. Please consider the following scenario.

Over the last twenty-five years you have built a business with your bare hands, a business that has become an icon in your community. You employ over a dozen workers, all who depend on your business for their livelihood. One tragic night you are shocked to discover your business has caught fire and is facing imminent destruction. You quickly evacuate the building of customers and employees and then stand outside with an incredible sense of anxiety and hopeless as you realize there is nothing more you can do. Instead, you wait for the fire department to respond and to extinguish the blaze. When the fire department arrives, however, not all of the firefighters jump forward to extinguish the blaze. Instead, a half dozen or so of these firefighters stand on the sidewalk in their street uniforms, talking, pointing at the flames shooting into the sky, and some even spend their time taking pictures and videos with their cell phones and cameras.

As the business owner, how would you feel?

As the employee who now faces unemployment, how would you feel?

As the bystander watching this unfold, how would you feel?

As a member of the media observing this action, what is your perception?



This type of event recently occurred on the scene of a structure fire in Jacksonville. The owner, the employees, and the bystanders were furious. How could six firefighters stand around and take pictures when the building was burning down? Questions like these are almost impossible to explain. All of us must keep constant awareness that all of our actions are being studied and scrutinized.

Effective immediately, all on-duty personnel are expressly prohibited from taking pictures, video, texting or using other digital media at scenes of emergencies. Only those individuals with written permission from the Director/ Fire Chief will be allowed to deviate from this order. Violation of this rule will be considered disobeying a direct order and will incur Step II Discipline.

Please remember, while on the scene of an emergency we all have duties to perform. If you're allowing yourself to be distracted by your camera or smart phone, you are neglecting your duties.

