



City of Seattle
Mayor Bruce Harrell

May 19, 2022

City of Seattle RSJ Network
cos_rsjinetwork@seattle.gov

Dear members of the RSJ Network,

The leadership of the Seattle Fire Department stands in complete agreement that the use of any symbols (verbal, written, or body), language, and/or behavior to communicate hatred, fear, intimidation, racism, or any form of “other-ism” is untenable and cannot be tolerated.

We acknowledge the department has a history of racism, sexism, and other disenfranchising practices. As much as we wish it were not so, the instances of nooses being left in fire stations on two separate occasions are stark reminders of the work we have yet to do.

Our messaging to the department and with media about those incidents has been clear: these actions are racist, have no place at Seattle Fire, and we are committed to pursuing the appropriate level of discipline depending on the outcome of an investigation. While the investigation at Fire Station 17 could not identify the responsible party, the investigation is ongoing into the noose at Fire Station 24. Providing regular updates to the SBFFA and SFD’s Change Team on the investigation status is something we are committed to doing.

Each member of the Seattle Fire leadership team has fully committed themselves to changing department culture to one that not only reflects the diversity of Seattle’s residents but where all of our uniformed and professional staff members feel accepted, safe, welcome, known, and comfortable being their whole selves.

Over the last three years, we have collaborated with experts to facilitate extensive diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging training; intentionally hired staff with extensive backgrounds in diversity, workforce development, and trauma sensitivity; and created more opportunities for ongoing learning and healing conversations.

In 2019, we began with our chief officers, then in 2020, we ensured every uniformed and professional staff member attended three-hour sessions on micro-aggression, implicit bias, and cultural competence with Dr. Caprice Hollins.

After that series, we collaborated with the City of Seattle Office of Employee Ombud in 2021 to provide all department staff further education on cultural competency.

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This year, our 2022 sessions will be delivered through a video series in Cornerstone - a collaboration with our Race and Social Justice Change Team leads that is currently in production.

With an eye to developing our internal capacity to support challenging conversations as part of our culture, we recently hired a Behavioral Health Coordinator. This position supports our Peer Support team and will enhance our understanding of the impacts of trauma through leadership and team workshops as well as individual coaching. We are also intentionally focusing on improving our recruiting efforts for new firefighters and professional staff from underrepresented communities by hiring a Workforce Development Advisor with expertise in diversity and career pathways.

We attempt to have members of the department's Change Team make regular presentations at the leadership team meetings, hold quarterly meetings with the Seattle Black Fire Fighters Association and Women's Alliance, and my door is always open for drop-in conversation.

We believe that dialogue and action around issues of race and social justice, even when uncomfortable, is essential and vital to shifting the dynamics of our organizational culture. We are committed to holding ongoing education sessions; communicating openly about racist incidents; expecting allyship; and supporting the mental health and wellness of our staff.

These efforts are all to ensure that our employees are in alignment with our core department values and actively creating a culture of inclusiveness and belonging for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold D. Scoggins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harold D. Scoggins, Fire Chief
Seattle Fire Department

HDS:ch