

Fire

Comments Communication

- Several employees have tried to take their case before the city when they felt policies were not adhere to or they were not being treated fairly. Nothing changes after presenting their case. It appears that a department head does not have to follow their own policies but the employees do.
- We have no communication at the Fire Department. As I stated earlier, we are supposed to have staff meetings each month, and have not had one since May 2018. A responsibility of the Deputy Chief that is not being taken care of. With a lack of communication from the top down, you can only imagine the rumors that get started. As for opinions being valued, that depends on who you are. When we evaluate new equipment, it seems to always be the same persons doing the evaluation. These persons are friends of the administration or college instructors. Opinions of others are not sought or valued.
- Lack of effective communication on important issues from the Head of Department.
- The department head doesn't communicate Department goals or long-range plans with the employees. He often will shut people down when they are offering suggestions that he doesn't agree with.
- Communications is not the best that it could be.
- Never see department head. Never know what is going on in the department or city.
- There is no communication with upper management other than emails that come down, and any attempts to influence change or question policy is swiftly met with resistance and suspect of motives. The good ol' boy system still definitely reigns within the City of Gastonia and if you run afoul the policies will change or they will just ignore them.
- Communications is vital to make a strong organization, but I think the only time anything is communicated is when the department head is front of the media outlets. It is only for their personal satisfaction.
- Communication as a whole are a meet expectation and has room for exceeding. Communications need to be transparent no matter how bad or how good the information is. If we are transparent in our communication then there is no question to our mission.
- 90% of ideas given to the upper management are out the window before they make it to them. Only a few select people have upper managements ear.
- Although we have policies on how to communicate with upper management it is discouraged to speak with them freely without risk of consequences.
- Communication from my direct supervisor is pretty much on the basis of this is what we have to do, this is where we do it, this is what time we need to do it. Other than the bare basics, there is very little information passed on, whether it be that he doesn't know it himself or its not known at all.

Information passed down to us directly from the department head is far and few between.

Information from the city manager directly ... I don't even know who that is!!

Unless you apart of the aforementioned good old boy system, if you try to make your opinion known you are made out to be stupid and your ideas less than adequate.

- Opinions from lower level employees are often dismissed and not taken seriously.
- I am a newer firefighter. I have a place in line and I like to follow my ranks responsibilities and only talk to upper management when it's appropriate. when I do voice my option to my captain there is often nothing that can be done about my concerns. not a fault of his or anyone's, it's more of the fact that I'm still learning the what, why and triggers that make this department work.

Comments Decision making

- There are some members of the fire department that have the chief and deputy chiefs' ear when the others do not. Issues can be brought to the administration and then they will quickly change depending

on the self-serving others who can change the minds of the administration. It is very evident that in some instances the tail is wagging the dog.

- We are allowed to make decisions at all levels of the fire department. However, as far as opinions, it depends on who you are as to whether or not your opinion is heard or even valued. The Fire Chief is to hands on in shift level operations and the Deputy Chief only values the thoughts and opinions of his friends. I have a lot of ideas about improving the department and how we operate, but we are certainly discouraged from saying anything. The opinions of only a few are valued. As for remaining silent when you have concerns, there is an atmosphere of intimidation and to keep quiet regardless of your concerns. I believe that employees have a real fear of reporting policy violations. A fear that they will be persecuted for saying anything. Most of the Battalion Chiefs value our opinion, but a few don't and don't treat their subordinates very well.
- Only a select few get to voice opinions in the department.
- The structure of my department is para-military style management and all policy or changes must run through the department chief. All policy can and may be changed at any time by the Chief per city management with no discourse for the employee.
- Sometime I think decisions are made for personnel accolades, instead for what is good for the department
- Again, the decision-making and organizational structure is directly connected to the communication of all departments and making sure that all information is out there so that good decisions can be made by individuals with in their respective departments. Withholding information allows for misinterpretations of the truth therefore, plaguing the system with poor decisions. All members of the team should be able to make proper decisions with in the common scope of the mission; If we know what that is.
- As a new guy or girl coming into the department your opinion doesn't matter.
- I don't always feel that I have to ask my supervisor before I do something, I just like to keep them informed of what I am doing or plan on doing.
- I believe that everyone should have a voice. and be able to speak about that issue freely. I don't believe anyone should get in trouble, as long as it's done in a proper manner.
- There is a chain of command that needs to be followed on some matters. Some things do have to go through proper steps to be handled, however, we do have a lot of freedom to do things on our own without asking permission. There are always ways to do things better and people are always coming up with ideas in order to do so. But actually, passing that on to our management and anything getting done about it is anything short of a miracle.
- In my particular department I am a relatively new employee. However, I have experience from other states in the same department. Those places have given me a different perspective and insight into how things CAN be run. Here I feel like those changes are ignored or dismissed even though they may better the department. Management is the main reason these changes cannot occur as is the culture of the department.

Comments Diversity

- The fire department "good old boys" club is alive and well. If you taught at the community college, you are treated much better than others. Look at their leave time. They are allowed to "earn" more time off than others. A certain few are always chosen to perform training evolutions at the college or during live burn training. If you are not part of the "chose few" you will not be considered for extra work time, voicing your opinion, sometimes being promoted, or reassigned to a more coveted assignment. If someone tries to go against the "good old boys" they will quickly be shown who is in charge or is more important. If the "good old boys" don't like something, it will change.
- "The good ole boys' network is alive and well here." Yes, it is, especially at the fire department, or as we call it the 'Buddy System.'" The Deputy Chief lets his friends do whatever they want. He allowed one of his Battalion Chiefs to assign a rookie firefighter to the Rescue truck. A firefighter with no experience and barely out of rookie school. This is a slap in the face and an insult to us other firefighters who have worked hard for years to get the training and education we needed for a special operations truck.

Another of his Battalion Chiefs averages using 230 hours of "swap time", or flex time as noted earlier, every year with no question. This is time that the Battalion Chiefs keep up with themselves.

- In house opportunities to train have traditionally been done on a "good old boys" system. This in effect has created a situation where the highest trained group was from this catered to group. This sets them up to be the best qualified later down the line. There are presently more opportunities for others to get some of this training now but to a large extent when special openings occur the person picked comes from the "in crowd".
- The fire department is a unique situation. It does not matter what nationality or gender a person is, they can either do the job or they cannot. If someone cannot do the job then they are putting other lives in danger.
- We have very little diversity or cultural awareness in the fire department. Only about 15 individuals total out of 144.
- I don't think it has anything to do with diversity. The city puts too much on that. This department has hired a few real slugs over known well rounded people because of race. In my opinion everyone should be equal coming into this job. Everyone has the same opportunity. Pick the best person for the job regardless. A good example of this is our last hiring process, the in-house hiring committee rated a candidate last place across the board. Candidate A was the first person hired out of this group and a minority...???
- Still much work to be done to represent the city we serve as a whole.
- Diversity in my department does not reflect the city population. When time for advancement, the "rules" change to make sure certain people are able to apply for the position that would not have been qualified previously.
- I believe we should not have a group of people in the organization that only targets one group of people. It should be set up that all people no matter what race should have an opportunity.
- Treat everybody fair, and give others the opportunity to advance that has worked hard with their education to excel within the company. Don't let your feelings hold someone back from excelling when they deserve the position they has worked hard for. Sometimes the "good old boys" has to wait their turn. I have seen many applicants come through the hiring process that deserves an opportunity to become a Firefighter that has been let down and I know they have all the credentials to be a good Firefighter for the City of Gastonia. It really hurts my heart to see the same applicants come through every year and does not get the opportunity because they have no-one hear within the company to help them get on the Fire Department!
- I stated several times before, it's who you know not what you know so the good old boy system thrives here.
- I think that diversity is thought of too often. I think that we should have people here that can do the job and provide the best service to the citizens of Gastonia no matter their religion, race, beliefs, gender etc.
- Diversity is a double-edged sword. While I believe it is good to have a diverse work force, it should not come at the cost of a more qualified candidate. I don't care about any of the diversity categories. All I want is the best candidate for the job. If that person happens to be a different race or gender than me then so be it. However, we value skin color, gender or name recognition over the best candidate for the job.
- I like the people I work with
- I welcome any background

Comment Final

- Please take this information and make changes. Don't allow good employees to be stepped on just because they are not part of the "good old boys" system. Allow everyone the same opportunities and follow policy from the bottom to the top. Be consistent in everything. It's easy for the administration to make excuses at times. Well, these "good old boys" are more committed. Others would be too if they lived like kings without having to earn what they get.

- Once again, I appreciate the opportunity afforded me by the City and the UNC School of Government to give my thoughts and opinions. I'm not really sure what's driving this survey or what the city hopes to find out or have revealed to them.

I'll say it again, I love being a firefighter and helping people, but we have serious problems at the fire department, problems that have been overlooked for many years. And it's time for a change at the top. We need new leadership.

The good ole boy's system is alive, doing well, and thriving. And this is how the fire department has been ruled during my employment there. If you are not in the "click" you are not valued, you're unimportant, your opinion doesn't matter, and you are insignificant to the administration.

In my opinion, current and previous administrations have ruled with a fist of intimidation and the attitude of "how dare you say or question anything." I do find it very disturbing that an anonymous survey is the only way most employees can feel safe to freely express their opinions on issues. This is probably why we don't have quality people applying to be firefighters.

We were asked earlier in the survey about physical resources to do our job. The fire department is desperately behind in this area. We recently went through an ISO inspection that identified a lack of resources. The only reason our rating was improved from a 3 to a 2, was due to training points and extra credit for public education programs. According to the document, we need more stations, more trucks, and more firefighters to staff these trucks. The document also revealed gaping holes of coverage in the city.

One such area that has a lack of coverage is downtown and very close to the FUSE project. I find it very bothersome that the city is investing millions in a project to revitalize a neglected portion of the city and doesn't even have adequate fire coverage for this area. The even sadder part of this is that these

- Fix the good ole boy problem and be fair about promotions.
- I love coming to work and doing my job. I also think that this fire department could be better with some better communication through the ranks and also if employees would get engaged more often. Lots of times our employees sit around and would rather fuss than to try to make this place better as a large group. I am only one person but I try to engage the guys.
- The department needs to stop changing the promotional rules each time which benefits certain people. This has created an inconsistent method and has unfairly impacted employees both in future opportunities and financially.
- I like working for the City of Gastonia Fire Department, because all and all, I have worked with some good people and it has been a very good company to me in the past! And I hope it continues being good to me. The only complaint I have is: with the hiring process for the Firefighter position, please give other applicants the opportunity to work for the City of Gastonia Fire Department, even if they don't know anybody that works here, because they would love to have the opportunity that someone else would have! Sometimes the "good old boys" has to wait too!
- Thank you for this opportunity to do this survey. I hope to see the city grow even more in the future.
- I enjoy every day working at the City of Gastonia and I am more than blessed to be given the opportunity to work here!

Comment Future

- For the organization to improve, the administration needs to change drastically. The "good old boys" need to lose their power and influence. The policies need to be followed. Everyone should have a voice in the organization and feel as though they are important. If the policies no longer work, change them and go by them. Don't change them on a whim or to suit those who refuse to prepare for the future. When a promotional policy is changed, firefighters always ask, "who did they change it for.". They are always suspicious of policy changes because of the "good old boys" system. The administration expects people to earn college degrees and prepare for promotions, then people are promoted who did not meet the requirements for the position and can't perform when they are promoted. When I came to the fire department, I was very excited to work for the City of Gastonia. I was doing something I truly loved. As I have seen lives turned upside down, I have often regretted coming here. When you've been

somewhere for a long time, it's too hard to leave and start over in a new career and have to work longer than you would if you stay. If you follow policy and earn a position, you should be promoted without the rules changing or extra requirements being placed on employees when the "good old boys" don't even have to meet the minimum requirements. I have not been as committed to my job in the last several years because I see inconsistent treatment of my fellow firefighters. Although I will continue to do a good job, my heart is often not in it because of the way people are treated. Why get extremely attached when the administration can take away what you have earned and give it to someone who hasn't.

- I appreciate the opportunity that I have been given with this survey and my hope is that my opinion will be valued and my comments looked into and found to be valid. The city has been good to me, and my salary and benefits are more than fair. I also love my job as a firefighter and would not want to do anything else, but we have a lot of problems at the fire department. We have people being promoted to, or put into positions that they are not qualified for. It is a blatant policy violation when they don't meet the minimum requirements set forth by the policy. This is a slap in the face to those of us who work hard, study, and prepare. Some employees never work their 40-hour week with nothing said.
- the good ole boy's system is still alive and well with this department, policies changed at the last minute to benefit certain ones and as a result these people are now in promotional range and just last year would not be allowed to test. This brings moral down more than anything else within this department
- Will be retiring in 4 years.
- Hopefully the current regime retires soon and a more progressive management team can replace the current good ol' boy system.
- More insight on where the department is going and its goals
- Been a good career and looking forward to retirement.
- I have been Employed with the City of Gastonia for over 27 years
- I am very happy in my job, there are a few places where changes and updates could be implemented to make things flow better and more efficiently. Overall the management does an acceptable to job.
- Because I have these concerns that I have brought up. I just want to finish my time as a firefighter and retire.
- I love my job with the City of Gastonia, and I hope they love me well enough so that I can plan on retiring with the City of Gastonia Fire Department!
- Unless the department begins providing competitive pay, better benefits and starts to move in a more progressive direction we will continue to have people leave for better options.
- I would like to spend the rest of my career here.

Comment Interpersonnel

- Some members of the fire department are treated much better than others. No matter what the issue is, no matter what policy says or what has been done in the past, the decision is based upon the people involved instead of policy or ethics. If you are not part of the "group," you are fighting for second, third or fourth place. Friends of the administration will always be "right" even when they are wrong.
- As for bringing up problems that we have at the fire department, I feel like the attitude is, keep quiet and maybe it will go away. I feel like your condemned more for reporting a violation or bringing a problem to light, than if you were the one that actually broke the policy. We have several employees that just do what they want, when they want, and how they want. It's obvious to everyone, including the administration, but no one does anything about it.
- Any effort to effect change is met with resistance that is partly due to the history and tradition of the fire service. However, change is coming and it is far easier to get ahead of the events than to catch up. If you act different, do not fit the idea physical profile or do not believe the way middle or upper management believes you are ostracized to an outlying station where they do not have to deal with you or hear from you.

- There are cliques or groups within this department and employees know who they are, and they can't beat the establishment.
- It's all about options, if you're willing to take the risk be ready for what may happen. Nothing upfront and to your face but truck assignments, special assignments, etc.
- This place has no respect anymore. I am saying this because I have been in the fire service a long time and I am not the only one that sees the problem. There is no respect from the younger Firefighter because all our higher ups believe in is education over experience. I was personally told one time that "I should be farther along in my career because I am older." I honestly believe that not everyone goes down the same road in life. So, the older experienced guys get left in the dark while 5-year Firefighter makes captain because they have a degree and lack knowledge in the fire service. This Fire department looks for degrees over experience.
- Interpersonal treatment is very good in our department.
- Risk a lot to save a lot.

Comment Job Facets

- Some employees like to complain about newly promoted employees making the same pay when raises have not been plentiful for several years. Instead of compensating employees who have been in a higher rank for several years, the former city manager decided to drop the pay of those who would be promoted next. This affects the newly promoted employee for the rest of their life through pay and retirement contributions. Usually the employee complaining probably does not deserve what they are getting. Flex time is often questioned at the fire department. Not all employees who earn flex time seem to earn it the same way or for the same things. It is evident that some employees in higher positions seem to have extra time off when others do not. Who keeps record of flex time earned and used? It doesn't seem to be tracked very well.
- I am very happy and satisfied with the salary and benefits package offered and maintained by the city. I certainly appreciate the study that was done several years ago and more importantly, that it was acted on with raises and an additional holiday. City Administration, the Mayor, and Council seem to have a genuine concern for the employees and want them to be happy and productive. I feel they want us to succeed regardless of the department we work in. This is exhibited on a daily basis by the benefits offered and at no cost to the employee, i.e. wellness programs, city nurse with an on-site wellness clinic, raises, etc.
- I totally disagree with tying performance evaluations to pay. I have heard that the city is going to do this. It is almost always a bad idea. This sets up a system where you are limited in the number of highest evaluations you can give and sets up situations where your rank structure is damaged and people of lower rank make more than people of higher rank
- The seniority-based pay raises over the last couple years have been beneficial. I hope we do not go back to raises based off of performance appraisals.
- Need better insurance, and need to do a pay study and pay people for the jobs they are doing. A new person in a position shouldn't make the same money as a person that has been in the same position for 10 or 15 years.
- The health insurance is non-effective high deductible HSA and extremely expensive for anything other than the employee coverage. The family coverage with deductible cost about \$10,000 per year before they cover anything and then it is 80/20. That is for basic health insurance nothing extra.
- Cost of health care is rising but they keep putting the same amount of monies in HSA accounts. On site health care clinic needs to see family members also
- Health Insurance could use some improvements.
- I wish Fire Department as well as Police Department pay was better and that we didn't have to work so many part-time jobs to make a living. We sacrifice our families in so many ways by getting more education, working more part-time jobs. The fire department spends one-third of their life at work missing holidays, nights, and weekends with their families.

- We have had the same health insurance plan, high deductible plan, for years and there are much better plans out there for the price the city pays per individual. The plan we have appears to be more of a "bankruptcy prevention plan" instead of health plan. The dental plan is not much better, anything past a cleaning and you might as well not have the dental insurance.
- While retirement, vacation time, and pay are decent, health Insurance is terrible. The actual cost versus coverage is ridiculous.
- I believe that once the department heads take from you the thrill of trying to do good through a promotion process and then be shot down because you screw up on a promotional process, that it really effects your attitude toward the process and you no longer desire to try for advancement opportunities in your career because fear of failure and to add on top of that putting kids in charge because they hold a degree and no experience. I don't believe someone should get suspended or in trouble for preforming a promotional process. That makes trying to better yourself in a department not worth it.
- While I have been with the city I have received numerous raises within less than 3 years of being here. However, the city starting salary for my job was already drastically low. In my department and without having actual statistics, I would say that more than half of the employees work second jobs because they cannot live off the city salary.
- It could get better with more pay!

Comments Morale

- Being a firefighter is a calling. Even though there are problems in the organization, I love what I do and I like to help others with their problems. It is rewarding to help others and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- The morale seems to be at an all-time low at the fire department. As I mentioned in earlier comments, no one at the department has shown interest in attending the Firefighter's Ball or the picnic. We no longer schedule either of these events. For the most part, I believe that everyone at the fire department loves their job. The city provides a very attractive salary and benefits package for all ranks. It's the decisions by upper management at the fire department that seem to have everyone upset. Policies change every day, but nothing is in writing. And it depends on who you are as to your importance in the organization and how you are valued. I know of several instances where firefighters have challenged and grieved policies to the City Manager with no change. I find it very upsetting that the majority of the fire department disagrees with something, but a grievance never changes anything even though more than adequate evidence shows that it's wrong.
- Too often those that do a lot of the work here are not rewarded, often if goes to the in crowd
- I love my job and look forward to coming to work.
- Morale would be better is more than about 8 people had any input into the department. There is definitely a ruling class and a subordinate class.
- Morale in the department could be much better. Rules and policies are made to be followed by all, but some see them and do other things. Depends on who you are.
- I love this job and believe fully that I am doing what God wants me to do.
- I personally agree that moral in the fire service is down, because we change rules I believe to benefit other.
- I have been with City of Gastonia for about 14 years, and I always tell people I will retire from the City of Gastonia Fire Department, because I "love" my job! It makes me feel good when I hear people talk about the Fire Department and when I see my coworkers saving lives and properties!
- I am very prideful of my department and the city. I talk highly of it and would recommend it to someone interested in working here.
- I absolutely love my job. I enjoy waking up every day knowing that I am coming to help people and make the community a better place.

Comments Supervisor

- My supervisor may not evaluate me fairly because I'm not one of his friends or he does not want to show how valuable I am. He does not want others to compete with his friends.
- I do, but also a fear of retaliation for any comments that I may make. I will say that you will be hard pressed to get employees to be completely honest for the same fear of retaliation. To many things are swept under the rug at the fire department.
- I feel my direct supervisor goes the extra mile to make sure his subordinates are informed, corrected when needed and always praised for the work they accomplish.
- My direct supervisor is awesome to work for
- My supervisors gives men feed back to help me grow as an individual and employee
- Evaluations are up in the air. Every employees is due the same time every year. If you are moved during the year to a new station you may have a new supervisor evaluating you when you've only worked for this person for a few weeks. It could be great or it could be bad depending on the supervisor.
- On my past evaluation, even though I thought it was an ok evaluation, I was still a little disappointed with what my Supervisor had evaluated me on, because he failed to notice certain things that I had accomplished, I was very disappointed that it was not mentioned in my evaluation.
- I get very little feedback from my direct supervisor.
- I have been with my supervisor over 7 years now, he continues to teach us new things and allows us to give our opinions to better the costumer service.

Comments Team

- We need more up to date technology and resources.
- To provide better coverage of the city, the fire department would need additional fire stations in area that we are able to cover due to travel distance. In new annexed areas, the city should provide coverage for new areas of the city without compromising the safety of firefighters. Not only may a new station need to be built, but additional units may need to be housed and staffed in areas that can quickly respond and assist others units in the performance of their duties. All citizens should have the same amount of city resources available not matter where they live or work in the city. The city should not try to "get by" with minimal coverage in the edges of the city limits.
- As for opportunities for advancement, it depends. At the fire department, we have specific job descriptions that outline the requirements for certain positions. We also have a policy stating the promotional guidelines for these positions. Those requirements seem to keep changing and/or are not adhered to-most recently, the Deputy Chiefs position. In G.A.G 04.30.01 of the policy manual, the first sentence of the job description for Deputy Chief says "All candidates must hold a Bachelor's Degree in a fire related field or a Bachelor's Degree in any field with an Associate's Degree in a fire related field. (i.e. All fire disciplines, public safety, emergency management response, terrorism, emergency medical response) and three continuous years of supervisory experience as a Battalion Chief." A memo from the Fire Chief was sent to the department on December 16, 2016 stating that the Deputy Chiefs position would be coming open. The email stated "All interested Battalion Chiefs and above who meet the qualifications listed in Gastonia Fire Department's G.A.G 04.30.01 should submit a resume including cover letter to me by email before 5pm on December 23rd." Three Battalion Chiefs and one Assistant Chief were allowed to apply. The Assistant Chief is the only one who met the educational requirements stated in our policy manual. A Battalion Chief with no Bachelor's Degree, with less training and certifications, and less experience was selected for the position. As it stands right now, the Deputy Chief does not meet the minimum requirements to test for Captain or Battalion Chief. And these are the positions that he supervises. This has caused a lot of division in the department and an even stronger lack of trust in the administration. It also calls into question our promotional process. On the 2016 Captain's list, the Fire Chief chose to skip a candidate for promotion twice. This person had taken a written test and assessment center to prove his abilities and during

- There are new educational requirements for advancing in my department. Some of the requirements are unevenly applied. A 2 year degree in a department related field is required for a mid-supervisory position and initially a 4 year degree in a department related field was required for a command supervisory position but this requirement is waived for the command supervisory position this time. Therefore an individual who has a four year degree non department related field is not eligible to put in for the mid-supervisory position but an individual with a 2 year department related field is eligible to put in for the command supervisory position. It used to be that a four year degree in a non related field was good as long as the candidate also had required certifications and training in department related fields. This seems to make more sense and I don't understand why the department would change this except for the fact that they wanted to make it more difficult for members who came to this department educated but not from the traditional "Good Old Boy" network.
- Would like to see the fire department be able to open other fire stations to serve the public being added to the city through annexation.
- Although there is some training for my job, I feel that there could be more officer development prior to one getting promoted to an officer.
- The department needs to be more proactive when it comes to the protective equipment issued to its members. We shouldn't have to share rescue helmets, borrow equipment from other departments for deployments. It is my opinion that bullet proof vest should be available for members now and not wait until we are in need of them.
- I think if they require you to have a 4 year degree to be able to take the battalion chiefs test and a 2 year to take the Captains test then the city should pay more towards education to the employees to get their degrees. If not then the requirements should not be in place cause some do not have the financial means to obtain it.
- I feel that the City does a very good job of offering training and promotional opportunities
- Certain promotions require College Degree's and the City's tuition reimbursement is inadequate for this type of requirement.
- I love my job.
- Most forms of documentation are old formats and are very difficult to use.
- Minimum equipment for most companies is sufficient but it would be nice to update some of the older equipment like TI Cameras. It would also be nice to have a full complement of saws on each unit with electric ppv fans.
- During recent promotional exams, the guidelines have changed. From year to year, they change who is able and qualified to take the promotional exams. When they promote to a position, some individuals don't have the requirements set forth by administration.
- Some specialty equipment (rescue) is outdated and needs to be replaced and some equipment is needed to supplement different aspects of services in which we provide
- Training is typically instructed at a high level however some of the specialized training we are required to get we don't have the proper equipment for that particular field of work when we get back home. Although this has been brought up several times nothing has changed.
In regards to advancement there are a good amount of ways to advance however a lot of times it comes down to some one's opinion and if you're not in their click you're out.
- Advancement is hard, due to low education financial help.
- Due to Gastonia being a small city, room for advancement is very limited.
- when it comes to Equipment and supplies, I think the Gastonia Fire Department overlooks things that are important.

Examples:

I am on our special operations teams and I don't see why we have to share our Rescue/extrication helmet with other shifts. it's a 200.00 helmet and we have to share it.

We should have extrication gear and not fire gear in the hot 100-degree days.

why does our Haz-Mat Reimbursement from outside our (agency calls) money go into a general fund, it

should go back to the fire dept. That way our haz-mat trucks are stocked properly.

I am a firm believer in being prepared. so why does our fire dept wait until a bad situation happens and then thinks we need to prepare for the next one, we need to be pro-active.

- When I was hired, I was hired as an Administrative I, and I was told if I past the Excel, Word and Power Point Test, I could excel to an Administrative II or Administrative III. Well I tried and tried so hard to excel on my own, really not knowing very much about computers! I have worked with 3 Administrators since I have been at the Fire Department, and neither of them helped me excel my levels to Administrative II or Administrative III except for the last one that was hired, she showed me where I could go on the computer to get my training! And I was so shocked, because I felt like the other two Administrators knew the same information she gave me, but they did not bother to help me excel with my skills. I felt like she was told soon as she was hired where to get the training, and no-one bothered to help me excel at all. And I thanked her over and over, because if it had not been for her, I would still be an Administrative I and now I excelled to an Administrative III with the help of her! With that said, I felt like information was held back from me to excel within the company.
- The department does a great job in making sure we have the right equipment to do our job efficiently.
- We need more resources and tools for special assignments such as being deployed for major incidents or deployments.
- The special operations team in the city of Gastonia Fire Department works hard through training and continuing education programs throughout the year. It seems to be a common and more consistent though that our tools and equipment for Hazardous materials responses are outdated and need to be replaced.
- We are so behind the times in terms of technology and the ways we go about doing business. There are so many new and innovative ways to make work easier and run smoother. We fall extremely short in being a progressive city in my department.
- upper management has become lazy and does not force training or uphold a standard as they should. yearly reviews have been dumbed down to the point that employees only care about if they are getting a pay raise or not, no longer caring about work effort or doing what's right. the yearly review has very little hold on job security and most firefighters like to "play the game" as it's said, and do the very least that they possibly can and still get a pay check for.
- Our department needs some extra equipment to help us do our jobs more effectively and efficiently.

Comments Teamwork

- The fire department has been divided for several years. We have a group of firefighters that have been allowed to do whatever, whenever without discipline. They are held higher than other employees but seem to be around when inappropriate actions occur. These firefighters and the administration believe that they are smarter, more skilled, and more talented than the other firefighters. They are not disciplined because of their relationship with the administration or because of their part-time jobs as instructors for the college. Some of these employees work when they want and do whatever they can to serve themselves when it comes to time off or flex time. Are their actions consistent with the goals and objectives of the city?
- At the fire department, we have 3 separate shifts. Sometimes it seems like we have 3 different fire departments. All three shifts do things differently. There are two Battalion Chiefs who seem to do just whatever they want, whenever they want with no repercussions. According to our accreditation manual, we are supposed to have staff meetings each month. This meeting is to get information out about the department, upcoming events, changes or revisions to policy, city information, etc. After each of these meetings, our Battalion Chief has a meeting with his/her subordinates. There has not been a staff meeting since May 2018 and this is the responsibility of the Deputy Chief.
- There seems to be a division amongst the leadership of my department.
- I think the departments do a good job of working together.
- Very little commutation with other departments.
- The teamwork and joint training can always be better

- Most of the time, we hear things about what goes on in/or about our department through other agencies or personnel but not from our department heads. Information is relayed by multiple supervisors, but is not consistent across the entire department.
- One of the strengths of the fire department is our team work
- I like the relationship we have with other departments and how we work together to accomplish the common goal of providing service to our City. I view the city as my mission and the departments as resources to minister to the citizens and visitors of the city in unity. It's important to move in one accord with one common goal.
- There are several management level workers that push their employees to work well with everyone, however there are several others that are the complete opposite of that.
- Sometimes I feel like others are not being treated as fair as others. I look at it as "it depends on who you are" to get treated fairly.
- Employees in my department do work well as a team, sometimes. We have a job where we are given a task that some people take a lot of liberty in how they are going to accomplish that mission, also known as freelancing. As far as leaders encouraging their employees, some of the leadership here is still under the "good old boy system" and they encourage who they want to see succeed.
- Working as a team in our department is critical. This ensures that we all go home to our families safe.
- team work is here, we want to be done as fast and best we can so we can go back to what we were doing in the first place, which was nothing. there is good team work in our department, just some personnel have poor work ethics when no one of higher rank is looking.
- I feel that my department works very well with one another, treating each other as if we were a family

Comments Trust

- The fire department has a lot of trust issues. Policies depend on who you are instead of what you've done, whether positive or negative. The department head can change policy without regard to the feelings or future career of others. When people earn a position, they should be promoted. When people have not earned the position, they should not be promoted. When employees follow policy and the rules change when it is time for a promotion or another assignment, how are they supposed to get what they deserve if the rules can be changed at any moment.
- The decisions that are made by the Fire Chief and his next in command are what causes us not to trust them. I feel like the Fire Chief is only concerned about the public's opinion of him, rather than looking after the firefighters. For three years we had a Firefighter's Ball in the early part of the year. An event that the firefighters really enjoyed. We no longer have this event because no one supports the Fire Chief. The same goes for the picnic/awards event that occurred in September each year. At a fire station, the kitchen table is somewhat sacred ground. We tease each other, argue with each other, praise each other, and solve a lot of problems. When the Chief walks in the kitchen, most of the guys eventually just get up and leave.
- There is a lack of trust throughout the department due to some decisions that seem to have been made due to preferential treatment in the distant past and the present. These issues are well known but the perception is that the unfairness happened and continues to happen. I feel some of the perceptions are accurate.
- I have never met the city manager
- I don't have any dealings with the city manager at all therefore I cannot judge him or correctly answer questions about him. I do think the Fire Chief gets a bad rap sometimes. He is a very thoughtful person that I believe goes above and beyond a lot of times.
- City management directly supports the department head even if it hurts the employees. This creates distrust because the City Manager's office should support the department head but should also be an impartial judge in disputes.
- Supervisor gives important feedback and guidance
Department head, he doesn't let his employees know the goals and what the future plans of the

department are.

City manager only met him once

- Without trust there is no unity, no communication, and no morale. Poor decisions are made at the expense of uncertainty.
- Decisions have been made in the past, decisions that have nothing to do with me, that make me question these.
- Haven't ever met the city manager
- My current immediate supervisor is one of the reasons I have stayed in the city and department and not sought employment elsewhere.

My department head needs to retire. My department head is "old school" and I don't think they are doing anything to move this department forward. My department head enjoys the spotlight so much even at the expense of their employees.