

Commended for response (4)

Melissa Wolf-Johnson	
Hired 6/10/89	Intermittent firefighter
Current	Firefighter/paramedic
Jeff Smith	
Hired 1/25/05	Captain/paramedic
Current	Captain/paramedic
John Pasqualle	
Hired 8/19/85	Firefighter
Current	Fire captain
Andrew Millwater	
Hired 5/7/93	Correctional officer trainee
2/7/98	Transferred to VCFS as a firefighter
Current	Captain/paramedic

Complaint not sustained (4)

Doug Powell	
Hired 2/21/00	Firefighter
Current	Lieutenant
Alexander Klepper	
Hired 5/27/06	Firefighter
Current	Firefighter
John Headrick	
Hired 3/24/01	Firefighter
Current	Lieutenant/paramedic
John Calache	
Hired 12/1/01	Firefighter/paramedic
Current	Firefighter/paramedic

Written reprimand (originally received a Notice of intent to suspend without pay) (1)

Arlene Redmond
Hired 4/4/98 Firefighter
Current Lieutenant \$16.28 per hour
Action: Intent to suspend without pay for **one** twenty-four hour shift to be implemented in the form of a pay reduction.
Jan. 30: FOLLOWUP: Intent withdrawn, received a written reprimand.

Notice of intent to demote and suspend without pay (3)

Eric Nicholson
Hired 4/4/98 Firefighter
Current Lieutenant/paramedic \$19.14 per hour
Action: Intent to demote from a lieutenant to a firefighter with appropriate reduction in pay (new pay-rate TBD) and suspension for **three** consecutive twenty-four hour shifts to be implemented in the form of a pay reduction.

Michael McMillen

Hired 7/8/00 Firefighter
Current Lieutenant \$15.72 per hour

Action: Intent to demote from a lieutenant to a firefighter with appropriate reduction in pay (new pay-rate TBD) and suspension for **10** consecutive twenty-four hour shifts to be implemented in the form of a pay reduction.

Jason Castelli

Hired 2/7/98 Firefighter
8/25/01 Left county employment as a firefighter/paramedic
Rehired 8/23/03 Firefighter/paramedic
Current Lieutenant/paramedic \$18.87 per hour

Action: Intent to demote from a lieutenant to a firefighter with appropriate reduction in pay (new pay-rate TBD) and suspension for **three** consecutive twenty-four hour shifts to be implemented in the form of a pay reduction.

Notice of intent to suspend without pay and participation in a Performance Improvement Plan (1)

Mark Nordquist

Hired 4/4/98 Firefighter
Current Firefighter/paramedic \$16.80 per hour

Action: Intent to suspend without pay for **three** twenty-four hour shift to be implemented in the form of a pay reduction, and the requirement of participating in a Performance Improvement Plan.

Notice of intent to dismiss (2)

William Whalen

Hired 11/26/05 Captain
Current Fire captain \$2,537.21 biweekly

John Moak

Hired 1/22/05 Captain
Current Captain \$2,273.82 biweekly



INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: James W. Willits, Director
Department of Public Protection

DATE: January 14, 2009

FROM: Kenneth J. Modzelewski, Captain
Department of Public Protection Administration

FILE NO: DPP-09-016

SUBJECT: IA-2008-05-251 Fire Services Division
Summation of Complaint

Summary

On May 15, 2008, the Department of Public Protection, Internal Affairs' Unit initiated an Internal Affairs' Investigation into allegation filed by Firefighter Laura Chorost.

On May 27, 2008, a formal sworn statement was taken from Firefighter Chorost who provided a detail presentation of her allegations of misconduct that were directed at the Fire Service's Division and various members/employees of that Division.

Firefighter Chorost's complaint spans over a period of time which began just after her employment date with Volusia County Fire services on October 16, 2004. Her allegations include:

Firefighter Chorost's history of complaints began in December 2004 when she was attending training classes for the Fire Services Division. Firefighter Chorost reported that while she attending firefighter classes former Fire Captain Galarza began making advances towards her. The Fire Captain allegedly called Firefighter Chorost to a meeting in a private office and made inappropriate sexual advances at her while blocking her exit from the room. Firefighter Chorost reported that she never reported the incident because she was told by Firefighter Greathouse that she is on probation and a probationary employee can be terminated without cause at anytime. The particulars are not clear as it relates to this allegation as the Fire Captain was terminated from Volusia County's employment with cause prior to this incident being reported and prior to any formal investigation being initiated.

During a period of time between May 13, 2007 and June 25, 2007, Firefighter Chorost was assigned to Fire Station 45 and Firefighter/Paramedic Mark Nordquist was assigned to work as her partner during that time frame.

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Firefighter Chorost began experiencing problems at Fire Station 45 with her assigned partner Firefighter Nordquist. Firefighter Chorost complaint centered on issues to include Firefighter Nordquist not assisting with completing Station work details, was slow to respond to calls for service, provided poor patient care as a Paramedic, watched inappropriate television programming (Playboy Channel) on the Fire Station television, made inappropriate sexual proposals/advances, possibly went through her personal items, and filed a false complaint about her being involved in an inappropriate sexual act while on duty.

Firefighter Chorost reported her complaints to Fire Lieutenant Jason Castelli who she befriended while employed with Fire Services. She spoke to him about a number of issues that were occurring over an extended period of time. This friendship was confirmed by Fire Lieutenant Castelli and he reported that he felt Firefighter Chorost was like a sister to him and he even rented a room from her in her home and they lived together there for an undisclosed period of time.

The Firefighter's complaints extended over a period of time beginning on or about the time she became employed with Fire Services. The Firefighter reported that she maintained a log of all of the events that caused her concern and provided a copy of those written documents and discussed in detail the events with Fire Lieutenant Castelli. However, Fire Lieutenant never formerly processed any of Firefighter Chorost complaints.

During Firefighter Chorost's testimony she made reference to a series of issues that she encountered with different Fire Services employees and felt those events were inappropriate and warranted action by Fire Services.

Firefighter Chorost testimony focused on many issues, however she did not have an accurate timeline as to when certain activities occurred. Firefighter Chorost reported that her encounters with several Fire Service personnel were vast over a 4 year period and are presented in the order that the firefighter provided her testimony.

Firefighter Chorost reported that she did decide to report her concerns that were related to Firefighter Nordquist. She contacted Firefighter Greathouse, who was a union representative and felt if she reported this matter to him then it could be kept "in house". At a later date, but just prior to filing a formal written complaint, she discussed her concerns about Firefighter Nordquist with Fire Lieutenant McMillen, but again decided not to proceed with her complaint at time out of fear of retaliation.

Firefighter Chorost reported that she had problems about how Firefighter Nordquist handled a two specific ALS calls and provided poor patient care. The first call was being supervised by Fire Lieutenant McMillen who made an inappropriate comment to a trauma patient which was witnessed by Firefighter's Ryan Thompson and Corey Davis. When the call was completed she was told by Firefighter/Paramedic Nordquist to complete the ALS ticket when it was the paramedic's responsibility.

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Firefighter Chorost reported her concerns to the Quality Assurance Officer Melissa Wolf-Johnson, and after supervisory review the ticket was directed back to Firefighter Nordquist for completion. Firefighter Nordquist became upset with Firefighter Chorost over the incident but completed the report as required.

Firefighter Chorost also provided information about a traffic accident when Firefighter Nordquist was not attentive to his paramedic responsibilities and delayed responding to a call for service because he thought it was going to be cancelled. Although the call was cancelled, it was after seven minutes had passed from the time the call was received.

Firefighter Chorost reported her concerns to Firefighter Greathouse and Fire lieutenant McMillen both advising Firefighter Chorost to "keep it in house" and they would speak to Firefighter Nordquist. She received no follow up information as it related to that proposed meeting

After this incident occurred Firefighter Chorost received a call from Fire Lieutenant Castelli and he advised her to "be careful when you go back to work". Fire Lieutenant Castelli told Firefighter Chorost that Firefighter Nordquist called Donna Brasol and told her that he was going to make up a lie about her being involved in inappropriate sexual activities while on duty at the Fire Station because he was upset with her for filing a complaint against him.

One of those complaints was associated with Firefighter Nordquist paying for the Dish television service after collecting funds from other firefighters, would watch the programming for up to 12 hours per day at times, and would ask her to sit with him and watch the Playboy channel.

Firefighter Chorost reported the complaints to Captain Moak and was told by him to "just let it go" and she did as she was told by the Captain.

During Firefighter Chorost interview she alleged that Firefighter Nordquist frequently spoke to her about getting divorced and getting a younger woman. She stated that on one occasion he told her "I would want to hire some twenty-year old and pay her to be my arm candy and to service me whenever I wanted" and would stare at her to see if she was interested.

Firefighter Chorost expanded on her initial complaint and alleged that male firefighters used the female restroom facilities, and were sleeping in the same bunk rooms in their underwear. She alleged that this required her to sleep in the day room on the couch to avoid being uncomfortable with the sleeping arrangements at the Fire Station.

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Firefighter Chorost reported that she became an out cast from the union after she called Firefighter Greathouse to discuss her problems. He indicated that he would get back to her on the matter. However, Firefighter Greathouse did not have any further discussion with Firefighter Chorost and told her he really did not care about her problem. Firefighter Chorost reported that she also contacted Firefighter John Calache who asked her "what it would take to make her complaint go away."

Firefighter Chorost reported that she received a threatening phone call from Fire Lieutenant McMillen. The call was associated with the filing of her complaint against Firefighter Nordquist with the Fire Services Division. Lt. McMillen allegedly told her that he was going to make her credibility look bad, make sure she would lose her job, and get all 185 union members to stand against her. Firefighter Chorost stated she was banned from attending union meetings.

It was reported that Fire Lieutenant McMillen then attempted to gain information about the complaint by posing as her union representative in spite of a directive from the Fire Services Director not to discuss the matter. Fire Lieutenant McMillen told Firefighter Chorost that he knew people that could get her fired, and knew about plenty of rumors and lies that could cause her a problem.

Firefighter Chorost reported having difficulties with shift exchanges due to the retaliatory behavior of other firefighters, was allegedly intentionally left behind when a call for service was received, and was the topic of discussion on the union web site where she was criticized for her actions.

Firefighter Chorost reported on an incident that occurred when she was on duty at the Fire Station just after her divorce. She stated that someone wrote "Whore" on the female bathroom mirror when she was the only working female that was on duty. She reported the incident to Fire Captain Whalen and Fire Lieutenant Whalen and was told to "just let it go".

Firefighter Chorost reported an alleged incident with Fire Lieutenant Headrick who called her and left a message on her cell phone, expressing interest in a personal relationship with her. Firefighter Chorost allegedly never responded to his advances. She stated the Fire Lieutenant told her that they could never be partners because she did not have sex with him. He continued to harass her through fear and intimidation. She reported on an incident where she had worked for 24 hours and just returned from a call and wanted to get some sleep. However, Fire Lieutenant became enraged and he and Captain Nick Castelli proceeded to scream at her while she was in bed and then attempted to console her when she became visibly upset.

Firefighter Chorost reported on inappropriate sexual comments that were made in her presence by Fire Lieutenant Powell and when reported to Fire Lieutenant Nicholson no action was ever taken about the incident

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Firefighter Chorost felt that that she was having her problems in Fire Services because it was a male dominated department and that there many times when she and other female firefighters had problems with male firefighters and had to endure.

Conclusion

In closure, the allegations filed by Firefighter Chorost resulted in the necessity to conduct a comprehensive Internal Affairs investigation into each allegation. The investigation which was conducted over a five (5) month period of time determined that the series of allegations ranged in severity from minor to extreme. The detailed findings of fact were presented in the Internal Affairs Investigative Report (IA-2008-05-251), dated October 07, 2008, and the Supplemental Management Report dated December 02, 2008. Those reports represented the factual content and findings of the complaint which led to the final closure of the investigative process. The final determination of which of the allegations that were filed and sustained (supported by fact) or not sustained (could not be supported by fact) were clearly represented in those reports. As a final note, 53 individuals were interviewed, some twice for a total of 58 interviews. The resulting documentation from those interviews totaled approximately 2,000 pages of record.

This report represents the completion of the Internal Affairs investigation. With your approval, this case file will be closed without further action from this unit.

KJM/jem

*Approved.
James W. Willits
15 JAN. 2009.*