



POLICIES THAT REFLECT ONE VOICE, ONE MISSION

FORT MYERS (FL) FIRE DEPARTMENT

The 115 career firefighters of the Fort Myers Fire Department protect an area of 50 square miles. In 2018, the department ran approximately 18,200 calls.

THE CHALLENGE

When John Caufield joined the Fort Myers Fire Department (FMFD) as chief in 2017, he did what any new chief would do: He began reviewing the department's policies and procedures. "We had a 4- to 5-inch-thick binder full of stuff—some was policy, some was procedure," Chief Caufield says. "There was no clear delineation between the two. We might have an eight-page document on high-rise procedures right next to a policy on command function. It cried out for organization."

The issue was more than just cosmetic, however. "It was not a useful document in terms of quick access," Chief Caufield says. "It was also not consistent, and the policies had not been updated regularly. We needed some reexamination to make sure our policies reflected best practices, department standards, and Florida laws and regulations."

Chief Caufield knew that would be a huge undertaking: "When I thought about reviewing the policies,

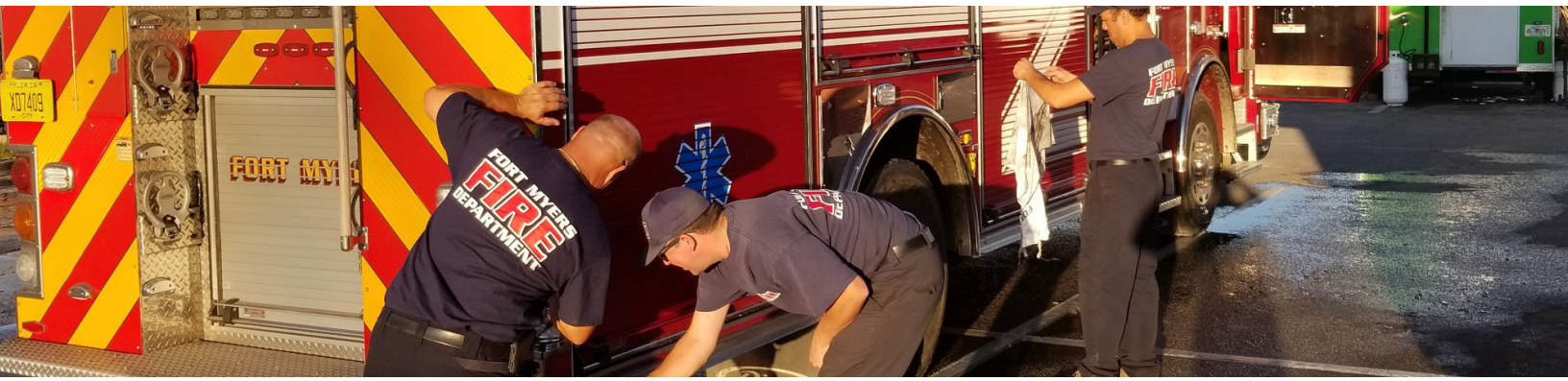
researching laws and best practices, and setting up an organized, electronic policy distribution system, I quickly realized we could not bring the expertise nor did we have the time or resources to complete a project as daunting as this on our own."

THE SOLUTION

Chief Caufield had heard about Lexipol and felt it was a good fit with the challenges facing his department. "I knew Lexipol was the industry leader in policies and electronic policy management," he says. "Frankly I don't know of any other company that could do this. It was an easy decision to bring in Lexipol."

In addition to subscribing to Lexipol's Florida Fire Policies and Training solution, Chief Caufield took advantage of Lexipol's Policy Cross-Reference service, which provided a detailed comparison of the department's existing policies and procedures against the Lexipol master policy content for Florida.

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"Lexipol amassed all that info in a giant spreadsheet and made recommendations to keep, revise, remove, etc.," Chief Caufield says. This process helped the department start to consolidate their existing policy content and apply consistent language as well as "other simple fixes like assigning policy numbers and annual review dates—basic but powerful organizational tools the Lexipol process pushed us to internalize," Chief Caufield says.

Another key to the smooth implementation: integration with TargetSolutions. "When we issue policies, we create a TargetSolutions 'assignment' that the firefighters must read and acknowledge them," Chief Caufield says. Using a system personnel were already familiar with "provided consistency in the process and helped us achieve very high policy acknowledgement rates."

Chief Caufield stresses that using Lexipol's master content did not lead to "generic" policies. "Lexipol provides the benefit of their vast network and legal resources, but at the end of the day it's up to me and our administration to take that in and craft the policy with the components we need to make it work for us," he says. "These are very much our policies that we've developed with great assistance from Lexipol. This is absolutely a partnership."

THE RESULTS

About a year into the Lexipol rollout, Chief Caufield sees "widespread acceptance" of the new policies,

including from the department's union. One of the most important results has been that "the process allowed us—and forced us—to be structured and consistent," he says. "Every policy is structured in the same way and accounts for a national, state and local perspective. Our policies now speak in one voice, with clear and unambiguous language."

The importance of such clarity is illustrated in a recent example. "The first policy we revised was the Conduct and Behavior Policy," Chief Caufield says. "It was number one because we needed to have clear expectations for our personnel, from the rookie firefighter all the way up to chief."

Not long after the policy was updated, the department became involved in a discipline case involving a conduct infraction. "The lawyers got involved, but it turned out not to be a legal challenge because the policy was specific and clear," Chief Caufield says. "The policy protected the department and the city from a potentially very divisive legal challenge. Six months earlier we would have been in an entirely different situation."

Chief Caufield sees the benefit of clear, consistent, up-to-date policies extending to all facets of the organization. "Not everything is black-and-white, but as a chief, as an administrator, you like to have as much specificity you can in areas you control," he says. "Grey areas will always happen, but if you can be clear it makes all your operations more effective."

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