



The Fire Officers' Association

Advice and guidance for members coping with Discipline, Investigations or Suspension from Duty.

The Fire Officers' Association.

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Coping with Discipline, Investigations & Suspension, including HSE & Fire Death Investigations.

Undergoing and being subject to discipline related management investigations, suspensions, questioning, accusations, hearings and so on, can cause similar reactions as exposure to traumatic events.

The discipline process can cause such effects as emotional and or psychological distress that can lead to harm and undermine personal wellbeing.

The process can be lead to one experiencing fear of a threat to one's position, role, job, future, prosecution, reputation, a threat to the stability and security of one's world, both professionally and personal home life.

The process can also lead to feelings of hurt, indignity, mistrust, humiliation, shame regardless of guilt or the eventual outcome.

Discipline based events that can instigate emotional and psychological distress include:

- Accusations, verbal and written.

- Exclusion from your workplace & isolation from colleagues (access to your organisations OHU should continue).
- Outcomes of such.
- Awards.
- On-going consequences

This leaflet seeks to describe the kind of feelings that people can experience during and following discipline investigations, what to expect and be aware of as the process goes on include:

- Frightened at the possible consequences of the outcome.
- Helplessness as to the course of events.
- Anger if you feel wrongly or unjustly accused.
- Alone and isolated if suspended.
- Humiliation.
- Shame.
- Embarrassment.



How can the investigation effect individual wellbeing, what physical & emotional health symptoms can emerge during the process:

- Headaches
- Poor concentration
- Memory problems
- Increased metabolism
- Sleeplessness
- Tiredness
- Disturbed sleep and nightmares
- Difficulty in thinking clearly
- Changes in appetite
- Depression
- Other individual effects

Some don'ts to be considered during the discipline process:

- Don't bottle up you emotions, and strong feelings, this can make things worse and increase some of the above effects. Let yourself talk confidentially to a trusted partner or friend of your feelings.
- Don't take to much on, being active can take your mind off what has / is happening, but you need time to think over what has / is happening so you can come to terms and deal with the process and outcome.

Don't turn to drink or drugs, they can blot out painful and worrying thoughts and emotions, but they may stop you coming to terms with the issues and impair your ability to undergo the process effectively.

Don't make any major life changes or decisions during this time, you may not be thinking clearly or rationally, try to put them off until the outcome is known.

When should you seek professional help if the process is leading to reduced wellbeing, and where from:

- Your FOA rep and this leaflet may inform your thinking.
- Your organisation's Occupational Health (OHU) or confidential help line (if available)
- The NHS "Direct" line on 0845 4647 or their Web site.
- The Fire Fighters Charity offer free emotional assistance and respite to Fire Service staff (see over)
- The "Mind" Charity "Blue Light Project" (See over)



The Fire Fighters Charity

Access to Services: 0800 389 8820

Website: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk



*Mind info-line 0300 300 5999**

Text 84999

E mail bluelightinfo@mind.com

Website: www.mind.org.uk

***0900 - 1800 Mon – Fri, calls at local call rate**