CUSTOMER COMPLAINT

Effective:	November 6, 2026
Scheduled Review:	November 6, 2029
Approved:	Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent process for responding promptly, courteously, and professionally to customer complaints. This policy complements, and does not alter or supersede, any disciplinary action procedures or requirements contained in the fire department's collective bargaining agreements.

II. CUSTOMERS

The fire department responds to more than 13,000 incidents annually. While many incidents may appear routine to us, they are often significant and unfamiliar events for the person requesting our assistance. As professionals, we will provide excellent customer service on every call and to every customer.

For purposes of this policy, a customer is any person who receives our services or with whom Department employees interact in the course of their duties. Examples include:

- The individual receiving our services.
- Family members, friends, neighbors, or others associated with the service recipient.
- Individuals we encounter directly or indirectly during the workday, including members of organizations with which we routinely conduct business, visitors to our facilities, members of the public who observe our operations, and individuals who encounter our personnel while responding to or conducting Department business.
- Members of our organization, including administrative and support staff. Excellent customer service begins with how we treat one another.

These customers are an integral part of our daily operations. We will treat everyone with professionalism, respect, and courtesy. Every interaction is an opportunity to address a need, solve a problem, and leave a positive and lasting impression.

III. COMPLAINTS

Customer complaints regarding any aspect of department operations, service delivery, or alleged employee misconduct shall be accepted and appropriately documented. Complaints shall be received in a courteous, respectful, and professional manner and reviewed consistent with the nature and circumstances of the complaint.

Complaints may be received in any form, including:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email
- Through department social media accounts

- Through an elected official or other City representative
- Through other reasonable means of communication

Anonymous complaints or complaints from individuals who decline to identify themselves, will be accepted for review. The complainant should be advised that anonymity may limit the department's ability to fully evaluate or investigate the matter.

Complaints shall be forwarded to the deputy chief. When responsibility is unclear, the complaint shall be forwarded to the fire chief for direction.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

When practicable, the deputy chief shall notify the fire chief of complaints received within one (1) business day. Notification should not exceed two (2) business days unless circumstances reasonably require additional time.

Following an initial review of the complaint and available information, the deputy chief or fire chief will determine the appropriate course of action. When a complaint involves an employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement and the circumstances warrant further investigation, the department will follow all applicable provisions of the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

The deputy chief or fire chief will communicate with the complainant regarding the status and, when appropriate, the general outcome of the complaint. Consistent with applicable law, City policy, collective bargaining agreements, and employee privacy requirements, specific personnel information, including disciplinary or other confidential human resources actions, will not be disclosed to the complainant.

V. COMPLAINTS REFERENCE PROVISION OF MEDICAL CARE

The Washtenaw / Livingston Medical Control Authority (WLMCA) will be forwarded complaints referencing the provision of patient care by a licensed healthcare provider. Patient care complaints will be addressed via WLMCA protocols including:
8.24 Incident Classification

Any parallel investigation and / or potential disciplinary action will be handled via the processes outlined in the respective collective bargaining agreement.

VI. RESPONDING TO THE COMPLAINT

The below guidance is from *Fire Department Customer Service* by Alan Brunacini when responding to a customer complaint.

- Do whatever is necessary to stabilize the situation.
- Quickly (one business day or less) contact the person who complained.
    - Inform the person we have received their complaint.
    - We are investigating.

  - We will recontact them.
  - Obtain any additional information they have (listen).

- Find out what actually happened.
  - Listen to all participants.
  - Do not be defensive.
  - Do not decide anything until you have heard everyone's story.

- If we screwed up, develop a basic plan.
  - First recover from the event that caused the complaint.
  - Develop a plan that fixes the problem so that it does not happen again.
  - Use the regular in-place management / operational system whenever possible to help solve the problem.

- Contact the customer.
  - Tell them we screwed up.
  - Tell them we are sorry (apologize).
  - Determine if we can do something that makes them feel better.
  - Describe the plan to fix the problem.
  - Use the participants, as much as possible within the collective bargaining agreement, to develop the solution that will prevent the problem from occurring again – focus on fixing the problem, not assigning blame.
  - Many times complaints / screw-ups create well-disguised opportunities.