Scenario #1
Firehouse Stories
You scored well on the most recent promotional exam and were promoted on the
day the list came out. Your two study partners also scored well and were also
promoted. All of your hard work has paid off.

You are a new Officer assigned to a single engine house. You are replacing Scott
House, an officer who recently retired. You had a brief conversation with him at
the retirement dinner when you learned you would be filling his shoes. He warned
you that the driver assigned to your new crew was not happy about failing the
promotional exam again and blames the department for not passing him on the test.

Fred, the driver, has been on the job for 12 years. He has held the Engineer
position for the past 7 years. He has competed in the promotional process for the
last several exams. On each exam, he has failed to promote. Fred is competent in
his job and very proficient as a driver. Occasionally he misses an address and
recently he forgot to complete his morning check out of the rig.

Fred feels like the department has it out for him. You notice that Fred gives you the
cold shoulder. He is quick to point out your mistakes and seems bitter that you
have promoted, while he still holds the rank of Engineer.

During a multi-company drill Fred uses the opportunity to tell stories about you,
the probationary Officer. Although the stories have some element of truth, they are
blown way out of proportion.
Understanding the situation

1. What is Fred's rank and how long has he been on the fire department?

Fred has been on the fire department for the past 12 years, the last 7 as an engineer.

2. How does Fred feel about his standing within the fire department?

Fred feels like the department "has it out for him".

3. How does Fred feel about you the new Officer?

Fred gives you the cold shoulder which is most likely because he feels like he is more suited to be the Officer.

4. How would you rate Fred's job performance?

Fred is competent as a driver; however he does occasionally miss a few addresses. Recently he forgot to complete his morning check out of the rig.

5. What is the issue you have with Fred?

The problem with Fred is his choice to hold court at the training center telling stories about me.

6. Is Fred permitted to tell stories about crew members?

Fred is NOT permitted to tell stories about anyone, even the Officer.
**Scenario #1 Explanation**

You are a new Officer assigned to a single engine house. Fred, your driver, has Held the position for the past 7 years. He has competed in the promotional process for the last several exams. On each exam, he has failed to promote.

**Fred is competent in his job as a driver.**
Background information – Subjective

**He feels like the department has it out for him.**
This is a red flag. Why does he feel this way?

**You notice that Fred gives you the cold shoulder.**
While this may be uncomfortable, he has not broken any policy as long it is not excessive. Nobody is allowed to make another crew member feel unwelcome.

**He is quick to point out your mistakes.**
When and where did he point them out? Fred is allowed to point out your mistakes, but he is not allowed to do it in a public forum.

**He seems bitter that you have promoted, while he still holds the rank of driver.**
Subjective – This is probably true but no action can be taken. It may explain his treatment of you.

**During a multi-company drill Fred uses the opportunity to tell stories about you, the probationary Officer.**
Fred is not allowed that put another member in a bad light. You as the officer would not permit him to do it to any crewmember, including doing it to you.

**Although the stories have some element of truth, they are blown way out of proportion.**
Whether or not the stories have an element of truth to them or not, spreading rumors about a crewmember, or his performance, is not permitted under the policies and procedures. If your policies and procedures do not specifically address rumors, his conduct does not promote harmony in the work place and is not allowed. It may be covered in the department’s mission or core values statement.
You could make a strong case that this is harassment or a hostile work environment, which are both related to making someone feel uncomfortable in the work environment. You would not allow him to do this to any crew member and you will not permit him to do it to you.

You are now meeting with Fred.
Step 1

**Officer:** “Good morning Fred. Come on in and have a seat. Would you like a cup of coffee?”

**Fred:** “No, I already had some.”

**Officer:** OK, I have turned off my cell phone and I would like you to do the same. I want to set some ground rules for our meeting. When I am speaking I expect you to listen and when you are speaking I will extend the same common courtesy. I will not interrupt you and I expect the same from you. Sound good to you?

**Fred:** Yeah, I guess so.

Step 2

**Officer:** “Okay, the reason I called you in the office today is it would appear you were making comments about me as I walked up to the group at the training center earlier today.”

Step 3

**Fred:** “Yeah, I was. Everything I said was 100% true. I have every right to say what I want.”

**Officer:** “So, let me get this straight. I did hear you telling stories about me?”

**Fred:** “Yes, you did and I have every right to say whatever I want. It was really funny watching you try and climb out of the engine with your seatbelt still in place and you darn near hung yourself. And when you forgot your clipboard on the medical aid, you looked like a chicken with your head cut off trying to find it.”

**Officer:** “Your interpretations were blown way out of proportion.”

**Fred:** “So what if I embellished them just a bit, that’s what we do in the fire house. Besides, I’m allowed to speak my mind. You can’t restrict my right of free speech. It’s my first amendment right and you cannot take that away from me. You may be one of the chief’s guys but you have no right to tell me what I can and cannot say.”
**Officer:** “I am not anyone’s “guy”. I worked hard for my promotion and I earned my place on the list to get promoted. I scored well and I deserved to get promoted”

**Fred:** “Whatever, you say.”

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**Step 4**

**Officer:** “So, just so I’m clear. You believe you have the right to say whatever you want regardless of how embellished your story becomes. You also believe that nobody has the right to tell you what you can and cannot say because you are protected by your first amendment right of free speech?”

**Fred:** “Yes, that’s right and there is nothing you can do about it. As a matter of fact I think you have thin skin and should just suck it up.”

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**Step 5**

**Officer:** “Okay, I believe I have heard what you have to say and I’m pretty clear on your beliefs. First of all, you are not permitted to say anything you want. Your first amendment right does not permit you to speak badly about anyone, including the officer while on duty and in uniform. It violates the ethical standards of behavior and is considered harassment. You are not permitted to make anyone feel uncomfortable in the work environment. Even if your comments did have some element of truth I want you to know they made me uncomfortable. I will not allow you to make me, or anyone else, on this crew feel this way.”

“Also, I would not air your faults in a public forum just to make you look bad. For example today’s shift you turned the wrong way on a call. The shift before you forgot to do your morning check out on the rig. It’s not professional for me to make you look bad in front of your peers. I would not do that to you and I am disappointed you chose to do that to me. I certainly will not allow it to continue”

**Fred:** “People always say bad things about each other. That’s just the fire station. Nobody ever does anything about it. It goes on everyday in every fire station.”

**Officer:** “I can’t speak for what goes on in other fire stations and what other officers allow. But let me be perfectly clear, I will not tolerate it and will take action if I hear you or anyone do it.”

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**Step 6**
Officer: “So, today’s infraction will be considered an oral reprimand. I will log this in my supervisor’s notes. It’s a file where I keep both good and not so good things about your performance. I use these notes to complete your annual performance evaluations.”

“I want you to understand that future infractions such as this will result in the next step in progressive discipline.”

Fred: “I didn’t mean for it to get to this level. I was just kidding around like guys have done for a long time.”

Officer: “While you believe you were kidding around, it was at someone else’s expense and that will not be tolerated.”

Step 7

Officer: “To review our meeting today, you understand that you are not permitted to spread rumors or embellish stories about other members or their performance regardless of the element of truth in your comments. You also understand that if this happens again you will receive a written reprimand.”

Fred: “Yes, I do.”

Officer: Okay, now that we have come to a clear agreement, I would like to talk to you about your recent promotional exam. Where did you have difficulty?”

Fred: “I had problems with the employee counseling portion.”

Officer: “Are you interested in my help? If so, I can walk you through the eight step process of how to correctly manage a problem employee.”

Fred: “You would be willing to help me even after what we just went through?”

Officer: “Yes, I would. I believe we can set that in the past and move forward together. How about next shift? I’ll bring in my files and we can start on a program to help you?”

Fred: “Sounds good to me and thank you.”

Officer: “You’re welcome.”
Step 8
Officer: “Now let’s get back to work.”

Fred and the Officer shake hands and Fred leaves the office. The Officer makes notes in his supervisor’s log.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory to address: (failure of exercise if not addressed)</th>
<th>Bonus points: (candidates who hit these items)</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Put a stop to him spreading rumors about you, the Officer.</td>
<td>• His conduct of giving you the cold shoulder in the station.</td>
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<td>• Fred’s bitterness toward the promotional process.</td>
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<td>• Offer to help him in the promotional process. Develop a plan for his promotion.</td>
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How to prepare

1. Review departmental policies relating to harassment and hostile work environment.

2. Review departmental mission and value statement.
Scenario #2

Cranky Jim

You are an officer assigned to a crew. The firefighter on your crew, Jim Doyle, has been on the job for 16 years and is very competent in his job. He can be counted on in the field and always seems to be in the right place at the right time and doing what needs to be done on calls. The younger firefighters aspire to be like Jim.

You have noticed recently that he has become very negative toward the department. Recently, he referred to a new policy regarding wearing a uniform in public as, “The fire chief trying to justify his job.” He has been very vocal about how the firefighters' association is "giving away the farm" and is bowing down to the fire chief and to the city.

Lately, he has been critical of the members on the other shift. It seems that each day he comes to work and the off going shift has done something that irritates him. This morning at shift change he was particularly upset because the trash cans were not emptied in the dorm, the previous shift he complained because he believed the crew failed to wash the engine, and the shift before someone left a load of laundry in the washing machine.

Doyle’s constant negativity is wearing on the crew. You are having difficulty filling the vacant position on your crew. Several people have expressed an interest; however, each of them has declined to put in a bid because Doyle’s negativity has scared them off.
Scenario #3

Starbucks Coffee

It is 0735. You are the officer on duty at Station 3 and are getting ready to leave the station following the end of your shift (official shift change is at 0800). You receive a call from your Battalion Chief who states she just drove by Fay and Pearl streets and saw Rescue 3 (ambulance) parked in the red zone, causing a traffic problem in front of the Starbucks coffee shop. Additionally, she observed the Paramedics standing in line for a coffee wearing shorts and tennis shoes, which is against the uniform policy. She has directed you to investigate the matter and contact her with a written memo outlining your findings and recommendations.

You go to the kitchen and see John Bernard. He is one of your regular crew members who was assigned to the ambulance. He is the kitchen drinking coffee getting ready to go home. The other member assigned to the ambulance yesterday was Joe Herzog. Herzog was working overtime on your shift and has already been relieved and has left the station.
Scenario #4

Late to Work

You are a new officer. Bob is a firefighter assigned to your crew. He has 9 years of experience and has a reputation of being a seasoned firefighter, who is going through some troubles at home, and is known to have with a short temper.

One of the officers on the other shift informs you that Bob has been arriving to work later than all of the other firefighters. He says the firefighters on his shift are tired of him arriving late and they want you to do something about it. The previous officer spoke to Bob about coming in later than the firefighters on the other shift and Bob told him that he could not be mandated to come to work before the official shift change of 0800.

Official shift change is at 0800. As a common courtesy, firefighters relieve each other at 0715. Bob routinely arrives at 0755. Today he arrived at 0805. The officer informs you that this is not the first time he has arrived late to work.