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WISCONSIN, USA

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Position Paper of Fire Management: A 48/96 Schedule for Staff

Introduction

The evolving landscape of fire management necessitates a closer examination of work schedules to enhance employee well-being while ensuring optimal community service. The proposed 48/96 work schedule—where employees work 48 hours followed by 96 hours off—presents both advantages and challenges. This position paper outlines the pros and cons of this schedule, addressing administrative concerns regarding workday language, acting pay, personnel movement, vacation selection, and mandatory overtime procedures. It emphasizes the importance of employee engagement and work-life balance while maintaining high service standards for the community.

Pros of the 48/96 Schedule

1. **Work-Life Balance:** One of the most significant benefits of the 48/96 schedule is the potential for improved work-life balance. Employees enjoy extended time off, allowing them to recharge, spend time with family, and pursue personal interests. This can lead to a more satisfied and engaged workforce, which in turn can reduce employee absence.
2. **Recruitment and Retention:** As the fire service faces a wave of retirements, a flexible schedule can be a powerful recruitment tool. The allure of a balanced schedule may attract new talent, helping to address staffing shortages and enhance the organization's overall capacity.
3. **Employee Engagement:** A schedule that allows for longer periods of rest can lead to higher levels of engagement during work hours. Employees are less likely to experience burnout and are more likely to perform at their best, ultimately benefiting the community through improved service delivery.
4. **Community Service:** With employees well-rested and engaged, the quality of service provided to the community is likely to improve. A well-managed schedule that prioritizes employee well-being translates to better emergency response and community interaction.

Cons of the 48/96 Schedule

1. **Administrative Concerns:** Transitioning to a 48/96 schedule raises several administrative challenges. Issues related to workday language, acting pay, and personnel movement must be clearly defined to prevent confusion and maintain operational efficiency.
2. **Vacation Selection:** The longer time off may complicate vacation scheduling. With fewer shifts available for coverage, it could be challenging to accommodate all personnel requests, leading to potential dissatisfaction among staff.
3. **Mandatory Overtime Procedures:** The implementation of a new schedule may require adjustments to mandatory overtime policies. Employees may need reasonable excuses for declining mandatory shifts, and establishing a fair and transparent process is essential to maintain morale.

FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

CITY HALL ■ 900 QUAY STREET ■ MANITOWOC, WI 54220

PHONE: (920) 686-6540 ■ FIRE CHIEF TODD BLASER ■ EMAIL: TBLASER@MANITOWOC.ORG



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4. Potential for Overwork: While the 48-hour work period may seem manageable, there is a risk of overwork during those hours. Ensuring that employees do not feel pressured to "push through" difficult days is critical to preventing service degradation and safeguarding employee health.

Collaboration and Understanding

To successfully implement the 48/96 schedule, collaboration between administration and staff is crucial. Open communication channels must be established to address concerns, clarify policies, and gather feedback. The administration appreciates the opportunity this schedule presents for work-life balance but emphasizes the need for a commitment to community service excellence.

Conclusion

The consideration of a 48/96 work schedule for fire management staff presents a unique opportunity to enhance employee satisfaction while ensuring high-quality service delivery to the community. By addressing administrative concerns and fostering collaboration, the organization can create a sustainable and effective work environment. Recognizing that personnel are the organization's greatest asset is essential, and prioritizing their well-being ultimately benefits both employees and the community. As we explore this variation of the current 56-hour work schedule, it is vital to keep an open dialogue, ensuring that we balance the needs of our staff with our commitment to serving the public effectively.

Respectfully Submitted,

Todd M. Blaser, Chief of Fire Rescue

Benjamin Kraynek, Assistant Chief of Fire Rescue

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