

Ideas for Improving Intergenerational Relations

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- Give people the chance to work together. Don't allow crews to segregate by age group.
- Do not tolerate malicious stereotyping or harassment based on age or generation.
- Give people of all ages the opportunity to try new things. Don't always assign people to jobs based on who already has a reputation for being good at something.
- Try to give people a "clean slate" when working with them for the first time, regardless of what you have heard.
- Ask questions. Most people are more than happy to talk about themselves and their differences if the inquiry is done in a respectful, sincere way.
- Do a skills and interests inventory of all department members. You may be surprised at the diversity of abilities and interests that cut across age groups. Most people will not offer this information about themselves, but will respond when asked.
- Be open to new or different ways of doing things. Focus on outcomes rather than techniques.
- Develop ways to pass along organizational knowledge to newer firefighters. Understand that story telling toward this goal is not wasted time.
- Consider the value of mentoring in all its forms. Do not choose or assign mentors based on likeness of age, gender, race, ethnicity etc. Allow mentoring to be more free-flowing, with mentors coming and going depending on needs. Consider the value of "reverse mentoring"—younger people providing guidance in some areas to those who are older.
- Provide opportunities for intergenerational groups to spend meaningful time together, not only in accomplishing work related goals. Try to find time for talking informally, working on other projects such as committees or special teams, or collaborating on community projects.
- Actively recruit younger, less experienced people into roles of union leadership and responsibility.