

**Sample Personnel Counseling Problems**  
**By Steve Prziborowski**

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1. You are a new captain. Ralph, your Engineer, has held his position for the last 15 years. He has completed the Captain's promotional process the last several times it has been offered. On each exam, he has failed a portion of the exam. Ralph is competent in his job as an Engineer but feels the department has it in for him to fail. You notice that Ralph gives you the cold shoulder. He is quick to point out your mistakes and seems bitter you have been promoted while he still holds the rank of engineer. During a multi-company drill, he uses the opportunity to tell stories about you, the "probationary" captain. Although the stories have some element of truth, they are blown out of proportion.
  - a. What would you do and why?
  
2. You are a new captain, and Tom is a firefighter assigned to your crew. He has 15 years of experience and a reputation of being a seasoned firefighter with a short fuse. One of the firefighters on another shift approaches you and complains that Tom has been habitually late. Official shift change is 0800 hours, but as a common courtesy firefighters arrive for work by 0715 hours. Apparently he has routinely arriving at 0745 hours.
  - a. What would you do and why?
  
3. You are a new captain and have been assigned a firefighter from another station who has been having difficulty getting along with his crew at her previous station. You have invited him into your office and welcomed him to your crew. You explained that he has a clean slate and have outlined your expectations. On his sixth shift, she removed another firefighter's laundry from the washer and placed it on top of the dryer. When his laundry was done in the washer, he placed his laundry in the dryer. He folded his clothes and left the other firefighter's wet laundry on top of the dryer. The next shift, he changed his oil at the fire station and left the old oil in a container next to the workbench with a set of wrenches that were covered with oil. The crew has approached you and feels the firefighter is "up to his old tricks" from his previous station assignment.
  - a. What would you do and why?

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4. Two of your personnel are known for joking around and pulling pranks on one another. One day at the lobby at headquarters, they started to joke around calling each other funny names and telling stories of past incidences. After a minute or two of laughter, Firefighter Jones started to back off and casually told Firefighter Smith to stop. Firefighter Smith did not stop and continued to call Firefighter Jones funny names. Finally, out of frustration, Firefighter Jones spit his gum at Firefighter Smith and the gum hit Firefighter Smith in the forehead. Firefighter Smith immediately got upset and filed a complaint with you, the captain and demanded that Firefighter Jones be disciplined for hitting him with his gum and for you to instruct him to keep his distance from him for now on. While this incident was taking place, two ladies from the local parent teacher association were sitting in the lobby and observed the entire event.
- a. How will you address this issue?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What steps will you take in addressing this employee's complaint?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What type of corrective action would you take, if any?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Should you contact your immediate supervisor?
5. Today, the off-going captain complained to you for the third time this month that your medic has not been properly completing the Controlled Substance Log Book. When you reviewed the logbook, you noticed that your medic had not properly completed it for the last three tours.
- a. How will you address this issue?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What steps will you take in addressing this with the employee?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What type of corrective action would you take, if any?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d. Should you contact your immediate supervisor?

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6. While responding to an EMS call, Firefighter Jackson, the assigned driver, passed vehicles on the right on two separate occasions. As his captain, you have had an ongoing issue with him regarding the same type of incident. You have informed him twice of the Department Standard Operating Procedures and Rules, as well as the State Vehicle Code, which recommend passing only on the left. If you were in an accident or caused an accident, you would be held at fault.
  - a. What next step(s) would you take to address Firefighter Jackson's lack of compliance?
  - b. How would you apply progressive discipline?
  - c. Should you contact your immediate supervisor?
  
7. Firefighter Bryant is an employee who has had a pattern of calling sick an average of 15 times per year. She would become sick in the middle of the shift and take the rest of the shift off. Other times, she would call in sick one to two days at a time before or after a pre-scheduled vacation, and on days of mandatory training assignments. She has been given a verbal and written counseling two years ago and was given a letter of reprimand with strong notice to improve her attendance just last year. She also was placed on a doctor's note requirement for each time that she calls in sick until her attendance improves. However, at the beginning of the year, she calls in sick right after New Years Day and proceeds to be sick for two more shifts.
  - a. What would you, the captain, do – if anything?
  - b. What level of discipline, if any, should be issued? Why?
  - c. What can the supervisor do to help improve her attendance?
  - d. Give an example of inappropriate use of sick leave?
  - e. Should you contact your immediate supervisor?
  
8. Firefighter / Paramedic Wilson is a 20 year veteran who has had, in the past, intermittent lapses of basic firefighting skills not related to his paramedic skills. His work behavior around the fire station is adequate to strong, although he sometimes zones in his cubicle with his headset on

