



How to Correspond with Membership

The world is filled with communication overload and inboxes are constantly displaying notifications for emails on phones, tablets and computers. This messaging influx makes it difficult for those sending messages to obtain a response from readers. So how do you correspond quickly and effectively with department members?

WHO is the target audience? Is the message going to an individual, a group or the entire department? Electronic communication is most effective when the reader is seen on a personal level and the communication appears to be tailored to them. Congratulate the department on a recent success or ask, in an individual correspondence, how a trip went or how work is going. This quick one liner will draw the recipient(s) in by showing the sender acknowledges their audience.

WHAT message is trying to be conveyed? Is a response or another action required? What is the goal of the message? If an action is required, an eye catching subject line is necessary to gain responses from the majority of recipients. Avoid exclamation points, bolding of words or underlining words. This can sometimes send a negative and nagging connotation and may receive the opposite response requested.

WHEN is the best time to send a message or attempt to communicate? As a volunteer department, members are usually busy with full time jobs and other commitments throughout the day. The best feedback and fastest response will generate with communication received in the evening hours or on weekends; with an exception to staffing emergencies and other situations requiring an immediate resolution. Also keeping in mind that weeks leading up to holidays are busy times for members as well as summer months with vacations being more prevalent.

WHY is it important to know how to effectively communicate electronically with department members? Running a fire department is an already daunting task without managing membership. Knowing how and when to communicate with an individual or the masses will allow for faster responses and information disbursement. Remember to keep in mind that membership is there voluntarily and that other life commitments don't always allow for immediate responses. Always maintain composure, understanding and willingness to reach out to all members.

For more information on communicating effectively with department membership and other "How To" guides, please contact Ms. Rhiannon Bogozi at rbogozi@iafc.org or visit our site at www.WhatFuelsYourFire.org.

