Employee Counseling
Understand the Rules

• How long is the exercise?
• Is it a role-play scenario?
• Who can you interview?
What Are The Expectations?

• Fire department culture
• Agency Policies and Procedures
• Outsider’s perspective
What To Expect

• Current departmental issues
• Issues within your City
• Issues within the fire service
You Must Know:

• Your agency policies and procedures
• Your agency disciplinary policy
• Your obligations as an officer
• Your limitations as an officer
You Must:

• Respond and act as an officer
  – Rely on personal power
  – Utilize positional power when necessary
The 8-Step Process
The 8-Step Process

• Provides the supervisor a system to follow:
  – To explain the reason for the meeting
  – To be used for fact finding
  – For identifying corrective actions steps and articulating them to the employee

*You should be listening more than you are talking!
Step 1 – Friendly Greeting

• Invite the employee into the office
• Set the ground rules (turn off cell phones, don’t interrupt)
• Consider taking the company out of service
Step 2 – Identify The Problem

• Explain the reason for the meeting
• Briefly state the acts (factual observations)
  – Policy violations
  – Training deficiency
  – Personnel issue

List the most serious offense first
Step 3- They Speak

• He or she speaks and you listen
  – Allow the employee the opportunity to tell their side of the story
  – Take notes – remember to be specific
  – Pay close attention – be an active listener
Step 4- You Repeat

• You parrot back what they said
• Be receptive to corrections
• Be specific with your quotes (you will use them later)

You will likely revert between steps 3 and 4
Step 5- Consequences

• You must know your policies
• Describe the consequences of the current or repeat behavior
  – Reference rules, regulations, policies, procedures, laws and customs
  – Be able to quote infractions
  – Don’t minimize the rules with statements:
    • “I agree that the arrival time policy is stupid”

*This undermines the policies and procedures
Step 6 – Action Plan

• Here are my expectations (reminder of their responsibilities)
  – May involve a daily drill to reinforce performance
  – Set administrative controls – additional meetings, written documentation, etc. (follow-up with bench marks) set dates and times
Step 7 - Review The Session

• Tie it all together
• Gain a common understanding of what inspired and get buy in
• Clearly outline the consequence of future infractions – “Progressive discipline”
Step 8 – Positive Closing

• Express confidence in the employee
  – Let the employee know that you believe in him and do not expect future infractions
  – Be brief and to the point
Union or Association’s Responsibility

• Ensure the process is correct
• Give the employee a sense of security
• Remember, you want the employee to believe he was fairly treated.
Firefighter Bill of Rights

• Planned versus unplanned meeting
• Employee has a right to union representation IF the meeting can result in discipline
Other Exercises

• Superior / Subordinate counseling can be about thinks that are not discipline:
  – Describe / conduct your first meeting with your crew
  – You are meeting with a new probationary employee for the first time