

## What I Need to Know

- Preparation is one of the most important pre-requisites for a successful meeting.
- A set procedure usually allows the channels of communication to remain open. Briefly the procedure for formal meetings is as follows:
  1. The meeting is declared open.
  2. Apologies for absences.
  3. Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and endorsement of them.
  4. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.
  5. Correspondence in and out.
  6. Reports and agenda items.
  7. General business.
  8. Date and venue of the next meeting.
  9. Closure of the meeting.

## How I do it

- The meeting should not begin unless there is a quorum.
- Such an orderly manner is designed so that the business of the meeting can proceed without wasting time and with worthwhile discussions and debate on the issues raised. After a point has been debated, a person may choose to move a motion. If this is seconded, the motion is then put to the meeting for a vote. Prior to the vote, it may become the subject of an amendment. Amendments follow the same procedure as for a motion. All speakers when addressing the meeting, do so by first addressing the chair.
- At most meetings, the chairperson has, as part of their role, the duty of keeping the channels of communication open and two-way. They should be neither too strong nor too weak in their behaviour during the proceedings.
- To maintain effective communication all meetings require a chairperson and secretary. Essentially the role of the chair is to keep order and make rulings on procedure. This involves accepting or rejecting motions and amendments and keeping the participants on task with the set agenda.
- After voting, the chair declares the vote as the accepted position of the meeting. Obviously the participants can disagree with the chair, though any ruling from the chair is generally accepted as final.
- When voting on any motion the chair usually abstains. The chair may, however, have a casting vote when the vote is tied.
- The secretary's role is also crucial to the meeting's success. They have the following responsibilities:
  - Prepare the meeting. This includes issuing a notice of the meeting and an agenda with background material if appropriate.
  - Record the minutes of each meeting including the names of those present and absent. Exact words of motions and amendments should be recorded, and the results of any vote.
  - Handles all correspondence.
- Just as the chair and the secretary need to prepare for the meeting, so too should the participants. They need to keep an open mind about issues on the agenda. If someone has placed an item on the agenda, they should be prepared to speak to the meeting about it in clear, concise and logical manner. Emotive language should be avoided and everyone should listen actively to ensure they receive the messages.

- This in turn provides a feedback mechanism to the meeting, and keeps communication channels as clear as possible.
- The success of the meeting largely depends on the participation of those attending the meeting. One way to encourage participation is to give participants a duty or activity to perform. Rotating the role of office bearer may also help communication by ensuring that regular meetings do not become too dominated by office bearers or too casual.
- The physical setting can also be an important factor in meeting procedure facilitating good communication. If people are comfortable with the physical layout of the venue for the meeting, they are more likely to participate. If the participants don't really know each other, it may be appropriate to ask participants to introduce themselves.
- A set meeting procedure can therefore ensure effective communication takes place, providing the participants are prepared to play by the rules and agreed procedures.

## **Reference Materials**

- Rural Fire Brigade Manual – Business Rule: D7.27 Brigade Constitution