

DISTRICT COMMANDER GUIDELINES

VFW Department of Nevada

4/15/2015



VFW

DISTRICT COMMANDER GUIDELINES

- I. **Duties and Responsibilities:** You have multiple duties and responsibilities in your position as a district commander, and they are all important to the success of the department, your district, and your district posts.
- A. **Training:** VFW National By-laws requires that you train your district posts. Normally, this is done through schools of instruction at each district meeting. Ensure that your schools are relevant, meaningful, and actually useful to the post attendees.
 - B. **Communications:** You provide communications up and down the chain of command, from the State Commander to the Post Commander and back up to the State Commander.
 - C. **Post Inspection:** As Assistant Inspector, you inspect your posts to ensure that they are complying with all requirements. You cannot just accept a verbal assurance; demand that you be shown the necessary documents to prove compliance.
 - D. **Department Council of Administration:** You are a member of the Department COA that manages the department from the end of a state convention to the start of the next convention. You must educate yourself concerning department finances and other issues that come before the COA if you are to be an effective member.
 - E. **Assignment of Appointed Officers and Chairs:** To succeed as a district commander, you must ensure that your appointments are qualified and motivated to perform their assignments.
 - F. **Leadership:** You are the leader who sets the goals, expectations, and achievements of the district during your year. You must provide inspiration and motivation to your post commanders and district staff that will allow the district to achieve your expectations.

II. Planning

- A. Start planning for your year as District Commander well before the district convention.
- B. Know the strengths and weaknesses of each Post and Post Commander.
- C. Know the strengths and weaknesses of your District Chairmen.
- D. Know the problems in your district.
- E. READ YOUR BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND COMMANDER'S MANUAL. KNOW HOW THE ORGANIZATION IS SUPPOSED TO WORK!!!
- F. Include your District President in your planning. (Consider having quarterly coordination meeting with your Sr & Jr and the Dist President and her Sr & Jr.)
- G. Appointments
 - 1. Make sure all offices and chairmanships are filled.
 - 2. Choose someone who will do the job, not just fill the position
 - 3. Distribute appointments throughout the District.
 - 4. Make sure elected and appointed officers have provided the District Adjutant with proof of eligibility before they are installed.
 - 5. Make sure District Election Report is filled out completely (name spelled correctly, current address, email address and Post number for all District Officers and Chairmen) and make sure the District Adjutant sends to Department Adjutant.
 - 6. Prepare a roster of District Officers and Chairmen including addresses, phone numbers and email addresses for distribution to the Posts
 - 7. Provide your District President with your officer/chairman roster.

- III. **District Quartermaster Bond.** Ensure that your Quartermaster is bonded. You should hold the bond. Make sure you get it from the State Quartermaster.

IV. District Meetings

- A. Plan your District Meetings in detail.
 - 1. Coordinate meeting time and requirements with host Post and Ladies Auxiliary.
 - 2. Make sure you have a useful and thorough School of Instruction
- B. Make sure all chairmen attend and have their programs ready. This should include program goals, awards and any costs. They should have a written copy of the program for you and for distribution to each Post.
- C. Call chairmen before the meeting to check on their program. If the chairman says he has no program, coach him on how to develop one.
- D. At least one month prior to the convention, send email or letter to Posts and District chairmen informing them of arrangements and your expectations for their attendance and reports. (Include cc to Department Headquarters.) (District President should be doing the same. You may want to consider a joint email or letter. If you do a joint letter or email, you and the District President will need to send copies to the Posts, Auxiliaries and Chairmen with a cc to Department Headquarters.
- E. **Remember: God first, God last when performing the ritual**

V. District Convention

- A. Check with your Senior Vice (assuming he is going to be elected as District Commander) to make sure he has made arrangements for an installing officer and that he has made his selections for appointments
- B. Ensure that final programs reports and awards are prepared by District Chairmen.
- C. Conduct a district memorial service.
- D. Elect new officers for the ensuing year.
- E. Make sure the Election Report is filled out and forwarded to Department and National.
- F. Make sure all Posts are qualified to vote at Department Convention. The State Quartermaster will provide you with this information on or about June 1.

VI. Department Meetings

- A. Department Convention
 - 1. Plan to attend and persuade as many of your district officers and chairmen as well as your post commanders and their officers to attend.
 - 2. Pay attention to briefings concerning next year's programs. This information is what you need to complete your planning for your year as district commander.
 - 3. Provide a draft list of the date, time and location of your District meetings and Schools of Instruction. These will be de-conflicted in a meeting of the district commanders and the incoming State Commander.
 - 4. Inspection packets given to District Commanders
 - 5. Be prepared to tell, in detail, what your plans for the year are (Membership and Programs).
 - 6. Decide whether to cast your vote as District Commander with the Post or by yourself.
- B. Convention Council Meeting (Membership includes district commanders and newly elected and appointed State Officers attend.)
 - 1. You will receive an agenda a few weeks before the meeting. Review the agenda so that you are familiar with what will be discussed. You will also receive a draft operating budget.
 - 2. Important actions to be completed during this meeting
 - a. Approve Commander's appointments.
 - b. Approve the Department operating budget.
 - i. If you don't understand something, ask questions.

- ii. You have the responsibility for approving or changing the budget. Make sure it is a realistic plan for receiving and expending Department funds.
- C. Mid-winter Conference (A mid-year status review)
 - 1. The State Commander announces national committee appointments and honorary national appointments.
 - 2. Presentation of posts and recruiter awards for performance to date
 - 3. Mid-year reports from department officers and program chairmen Update on Department programs
 - 4. Dates for District Fall Conventions (next year) selected. (Locations were selected at your previous Fall Convention)
 - 5. Be prepared to tell, in detail, how you have modified your plans to accomplish the goals you set (Membership and Programs).
- D. Mid-Winter Council
 - 1. Update on Department budget
 - 2. Discussion and resolution of any issues arising in the department during the first half of the year and for the remainder of the year to the State Convention

VII. Programs

- A. Make sure each District Chairman has National and Department information on program.
- B. Make sure each District Chairman is following through.
- C. Make sure each District Chairman is meeting deadlines.
- D. Make sure your Chairmen are coordinating with the District Auxiliary Chairmen on shared programs.

VIII. Communications

- A. Mail/Email
 - 1. Read it as soon as you get it.
 - 2. If it requires action, act immediately.
- B. If it requires action by someone else, make sure that they have a copy of the correspondence and that they act immediately. Require them to let you know when it's done.
- C. Be sure to fill out and return promptly any forms sent to you by department headquarters.
- D. Email Address: For your official VFW email, use the email address provided by the department's online communications system.
- E. Stay in contact with Post Commanders.
 - a. Talk to or email Commanders at least twice a month.
 - b. Check on current membership status.
 - c. Check on problems.
 - d. Visit a regular meeting of each Post in your district as often as you can but at least once during your year (Not including Post Inspections).
- F. Email correspondence to post officers and chairmen
 - 1. This is a method of communicating directly with the members of your District. USE IT!!!!
 - a. Be informative.
 - b. Be helpful.
 - c. Be upbeat.
 - d. Be encouraging.
 - e. Be on time to Dept. HQ.
 - f. Keep in mind the time difference between when you write the article and when it will be published.

2. Develop District email distribution system with at least one email address for a person who is willing to receive and distribute emailed information the appropriate person in the Post.
3. Develop and/or use a District website or create District Facebook page and use it for District communication.

IX. Membership

- A. START EARLY
- B. Set membership goals and make sure Post Commanders know what those goals are. (For example: end of August 60%, end of September 70%, etc.).
- C. Provide assistance to Posts if requested, but be sure Post is prepared for your assistance, i.e. has a list of persons to call on; has people to accompany you or your officers in visiting the prospective members.
- D. Use the Certified National Recruiters. Call them to schedule a recruiting event (Walmart store, county fair, gun shows, etc.) Be sure they receive assistance from the District and the local Post.
- E. Consider having a District membership contest. The cost of the prize is not as important as stimulating competition among the Posts.
- F. Check with your Post Commanders at least twice a month regarding their membership performance.
- G. Challenge your Post Commanders.
- H. Set up monthly member renewal roundups. This reinforces the idea that Posts must be active in recruiting and retention. They can't just sit back and wait for people to come in and pay their dues. Follow up with letter or email to each Post showing which Posts had members renew.

X. Budgeting (District portion of Department Budget)

- A. Your District budget will NOT cover your expenses.
- B. Budget should be used for Post Inspections and to work membership.
- C. Social visits to Posts encouraged but not reimbursed.
- D. Keep track of where your budget is and what expenses have been authorized.

XI. Coordination

- A. Use email to stay in contact with your Posts.
- B. Talk to other District Commanders (not just at Department meetings).
- C. Build esprit within District.
 1. Build on a theme.
 2. Stimulate competition.
- D. Keep your District President informed of what you're doing. Be aware of what she's doing.
- E. Insure that District Adjutant forwards a District meeting to the Department Programs Chairman

XII. Training Junior Officers

- A. Make sure Senior and Junior Vice attend all meetings (District and Department) even if they aren't reimbursed.
- B. Ride to District/Department functions together.
- C. Get District Chairmen to Department School of Instruction.
- D. Talk/meet with your Senior and Junior Vice Commanders outside of meetings. Include them in your planning.

XIII. Leadership

- A. Set goals for District and Posts.
- B. Help the Posts and Chairmen achieve their goals, but make them do the work.

- C. Make sure everyone (junior officers, District President, Post Commanders; Chairmen) knows what is going on.
- D. PRAISE IN PUBLIC. CORRECT IN PRIVATE.
- E. Use tact and diplomacy.

XIV. Help

- A. You can't do it alone.
 - 1. Use your staff for suggestions, help and advice.
 - 2. Ask Past District Commanders for help and advice.
 - 3. Ask questions. (Department Cmdr, ADJ/QM, Judge Advocate, Inspector)
 - 4. Use your junior officers and chairmen.
- B. Printed resources
 - 1. Read your mail.
 - 2. Podium edition of By-Laws, Manual of Procedure & Ritual
 - a. Read it.
 - b. Read it again.
 - c. Ask questions if you don't understand.
- C. Commander's Manual (a.k.a. Leadership Reference Guide)
 - 2. DOWNLOAD IT! READ IT !!!!!
 - 3. Use it for reference book.
 - 4. It contains most of the National Programs.
- D. Department Programs
 - 5. Know the programs.
 - 6. Available online at www.vfwnv.org after Department Convention.
- E. Know how your Posts are doing with the programs.
- F. Mentor
 - 1. Use a Past District Commander who was SUCCESSFUL.
 - 2. Listen to advice, but make your own decision.

XV. CALENDAR – Senior Vice Commander Year

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| June | Attend Department Convention.
Coordinate with your District Auxiliary Sr. Vice. |
| July | Attend National Convention, if possible |
| September | During Post visits assess people with eye to committee chairmanships.
Coordinate with your District Auxiliary Sr. Vice. |
| October | Attend District Fall Convention.
Assess people with eye to committee chairmanships.
Attend other District meetings as possible. |
| December | Coordinate with your District Auxiliary Sr. Vice. |
| January | Attend Department Midwinter.
Assess people with eye to committee chairmanships.
Begin asking people to take committee chairmanships and officers (Chief of Staff, Inspector, Adjutant, etc.). |
| February | Continue to ask people to fill committee and officer appointments. |
| March | Coordinate with your District Auxiliary Sr. Vice.
Complete list of officer appointments and chairmanships and prepare roster with name, address, phone number and email.
Prepare roster of Officer and Chairmanships (Name, address, phone number and email) for distribution to Posts at the District Convention |

- Make sure your Officers and Candidates furnish a copy of their proofs of eligibility to the District Adjutant.
- April/May Select your Installing Officer and ask him/her to do the installation
Attend District Convention.
Attend nearby District Conventions as possible.
Send Department Headquarters a copy of the District officers and chairmen Insure that all District Officers and Chairmen have provided the Dist Adjutant with proof of eligibility.
Request each Post send you a roster of officers and chairmen (Name, address, phone number and email.)
- May Arrange and conduct meeting with your officers and Committee Chairmen and explain to them what you expect in the coming year. If possible, include your District Auxiliary President elect and her officers and chairmen. This way, chairmen from both sides can coordinate with each other as well as coordinate within the two organizations.

XVI. CALENDAR – Commander Year

- June Attend Department Convention.
Attend Department Post-Convention Council Meeting.
- July Attend the National Convention, if possible
Copy program material you receive at Dept Convention and send to your District chairmen so they can develop their programs.
Make sure chairmen are ready to present programs at the first district meeting
Begin membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.
- August **Make sure District Quartermaster is bonded and that you receive the bond to hold.**
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.
- September Conduct 1st District Meeting. Ensure your schools of instruction are prepared.
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.
Begin working at collecting continuous member dues.
Coordination meeting with District Cmdr, Sr and Jr with District Auxiliary Pres, Sr and Jr.
- October Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on collecting continuous member dues.
Recruit new and reinstate as you can.
- November Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on collecting continuous member dues.
Recruit new and reinstate as you can. .
- December Conduct 2nd District Meeting
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on collecting continuous member dues.
Recruit new and reinstate as you can.
- January Attend Department Mid-Winter.
Check with District Chairmen on reports of District Midwinter. (see Page 3, item 4, b.)
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on collecting continuous member dues.
Recruit new and reinstate as you can.
- February Conduct 3rd District Meeting. Ensure your schools of instruction are prepared.
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.
- March Mail/email Posts, District Officers and Chairmen with arrangements for District Convention.
Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.
Check with District Chairmen to be sure reports and awards are ready.
Check with your Sr Vice to make sure he has made arrangements for installing officer.

Make sure Posts are eligible to vote at District and Department Conventions.
Coordination planning for the District Convention with District Cmdr, Sr and Jr with
District Auxiliary Pres, Sr and Jr.

April

Conduct District Convention

Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.

May

Continue membership campaign. Emphasis on new and reinstates.

Make sure Posts are eligible to vote at Department Convention

June

Attend Department Convention.