

Chief Beal
Golden Fire Department
911 10th Street
Golden, CO 80401

RE: Elf on the Shelf Mishap

Dear Chief Beal,

I'm extremely saddened to be writing this letter, but feel this form is the only option.

Recently, leadership communicated extreme action be taken —not only to identify who is responsible for this situation, but to terminate that individual. This approach has impacted the culture of transparency and the practice of assuming good intent that staff has worked to build.

The initial decision to address this internally created an opportunity for voluntary accountability. I was planning to come forward, acknowledge my mistake, accept my punishment, and certainly NEVER do it again. Now, that option has been ripped away and replaced with fear of termination over what was a true accident and misunderstanding.

While the display of the elf hanging from a rope is clearly inappropriate in hindsight, I can assure you this was not done with any harmful intent. Was it a complete oversight, stupid, blind, and potentially a giant issue for the department and city? Yes. For that, I am so incredibly sorry. I'm disappointed in myself for not seeing something that now seems so obvious. The elf was moved into a position in the spirit of Elf on a Shelf with the only intent being to move the elf into a new scene. It was intended as good-hearted fun like we all know the Elf on a Shelf to represent. This action was also done alone with a rope that had already been hanging there for months as what I thought would be an easy way to secure him. The fun surprise to others is the part of the tradition I was focused on. Unfortunately, that also means nobody else was present to call out or warn of how it might be perceived.

From the organization's perspective, I completely understand how concerning this appears. Anyone viewing it without context would likely have the same reaction. I understand the desire to know who was responsible and why. This letter is meant to provide context for the "why," but I cannot reveal my identity with termination being the only option.

I'm more than happy to accept a punishment for my ignorant actions, but do not believe termination is the proportionate response. My hope is this letter provides enough context to cancel the investigation and promised termination. I believe this would save the city time, money, and protect the transparent culture that we rely on.

If this matter were to return to an internal process, I would be more than willing to come forward and confess my mistake in person. I would only need clearly communicated, written confirmation within the department that termination will not be the outcome. From there, I will take responsibility and accept appropriate discipline.

Regardless of the outcome, I am truly sorry for so many things. I regret not recognizing how this could be perceived and for the harm it has caused. I never intended to offend anyone or damage trust. I honestly didn't realize what I had done until it was so big that I couldn't do anything about it without risking termination.

Thank you for your consideration. I'm very hopeful that this situation can be de-escalated and that the culture within the organization can be maintained.