

# Volunteer Fire Company Membership

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Residency Requirements

VFC applicants must apply for membership with a local VFC and reside within the response area of the VFC they are applying with. Exceptions can be granted for applicants living in a non-contract city or fire district within Butte County that does not have a volunteer firefighter program.

Residents living in other jurisdictions within Butte County that do not have a volunteer program can apply with the nearest department volunteer fire company.

### 2.2 Minimum Age Requirements

VFC applicants must be a minimum of eighteen (18) years of age.

### 2.3 Application Process and Time Frames

The department will use a standard procedure for VFF's to follow to become VFF's.

VFF's and career employees will ensure that the application and acceptance process is free from discrimination of any type.

Applicants will not engage in any departmental activities until approval is received from the County Finance Officer. Reimbursement rosters for VFF's involving activities prior to their acceptance date will not be honored. Applicants are not covered by Workers Compensation Insurance until they are formally accepted (added to the active roster).

#### Process to become a PVFF

The department has adopted an annual cycle for the recruitment and training of new VFF's.

- All prospective VFF's should be provided the recruitment handout and directed to the VFF recruitment webpage at <http://joinbcfd.org/> to complete the VFF interest form. The completed form is emailed directly to the volunteer training coordinator. The volunteer training coordinator will make personal contact with the prospective VFF and explain the recruitment and training timelines and process.

- The volunteer training coordinator will also direct the prospective VFF to the correct community for VFC introduction and familiarization. After contact is made by the volunteer training coordinator the prospective VFF will be encouraged to stay in contact with their VFC.
- The department will utilize a two month focused recruitment process during the months of August and September of each year. This will consist of various recruitment techniques to reach out to our local communities that have a need to increase the number of VFF's in their VFC.
- During the month of October the department will hold an informational meeting with all the prospective new VFF's. This meeting will consist of an overview of the department and the requirements to be a VFF. The VFF application will be distributed to prospective VFF's at this meeting.
- Approximately two weeks after the informational meeting there will be a 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting held to review completed applications, confirm application accuracy, the I-9 will be verified and confirmation that department's minimum requirements have been met.
- VFF interviews will also be held at the above meeting and VFC's that have new VFF's in the recruitment process will be invited to interview their prospective new VFF's utilizing predetermined interview questions.
- The interview panel will forward the interview results with the application to the County Finance Officer. The County Finance Officer, Volunteer Training Officer and Volunteer Liaison Officer and the interview panel members will review the applications for county standards compliance and rank the applications by priority order for appointment. Each VFF candidate will be notified by mail of their interview results.

Based on the VFF desired level of response, the below training modules will be scheduled and are required.

#### Support Responder

- During the month of November the Support Module will be offered
- Attend Support Module, (approximately 32 hours or 4 weekend days)

#### EMS Responder

- During the month of December the EMS Module will be offered
- Attend Support and EMS Module, (EMS module is approximately 32 hours or 4 weekend days)

### Full Responder

- During the month of January the Wildland Module will be offered
- During the month of February the Structure Module will be offered
- Attend Support, EMS and Firefighter Modules, (Wildland & Structure modules are approximately 72 hours or 9 weekend days)
- During the month of March the volunteer badge pinning and awards banquet will be scheduled

### Volunteer Application Packet

A current application packet must be completed by each applicant prior to being considered for appointment.

The application package consists of the following documents:

- Application for Appointment
- Health Questionnaire (in a sealed confidential envelope)
- Emergency Notification Form
- Form W-4
- Form I-9
- Social Security Card
- Rules of Conduct Form
- A copy of the Live Scan form (DOJ/FBI). A copy of the completion receipt must be attached to the completed application
- Attachment 10.15 (BCFD Authorization to Drive) with the following attachments:
  - ✓ A DMV printout (within the last 30 days)
  - ✓ A copy of the applicant's current Auto Insurance Policy declaration page with coverage limits (\$15,000/\$30,000 personal injury and \$25,000 for property damage minimum limits),
  - ✓ A copy of the applicants Driver's License
- The Oath of Allegiance is required by the Government Code. It is necessary that each new VFF execute the official "Oath of Allegiance" (or "Affirmation") prior to appointment (attachment 10.33, Oath of Allegiance).
- Background investigation and County Finance Officer review
- Health questionnaire reviewed by physician
- Live Scan (FBI/DOJ) results will be reviewed (by the DOJ approved custodian of records)
- Respiratory Protection Program Health Questionnaire reviewed based on desired level of response
- Complete Spiro & Respiratory Protection Program Fit test based on desired level of response (after the wildland module and prior to the structure module)
- The new volunteer approval process may take up to 4 weeks from the October informational meeting.

Current fire explorers in good standing that have completed a minimum of 1 year in a BCFD fire explorer post and can provide a letter of support and recommendation from the explorer post advisor will be accepted into a BCFD VFC. Fire explorers will have to complete the entire hiring process.

All candidates are encouraged to conduct a self-evaluation prior to applying.

The self-evaluation should include the following criteria:

- Are you 18 years old?
- Are you in good health?
- Are you able to meet the physical demands of a firefighter?
- Do you have a clean criminal record?
- Do you have a clean driving record?
- Do you have auto insurance meeting the minimum requirements?

The application package is confidential and can only be viewed by department members with a need to know (typically only the County Finance Officer).

All applications will go through a background investigation process prior to acceptance. See Live Scan on page 5.

All completed Health Questionnaires will be forwarded, in a sealed envelope marked Confidential, to the County Finance Officer with the other application materials for processing. The applicant will place the completed health questionnaire in the confidential envelope.

Health Questionnaires are evaluated by authorized department members only. If the health questionnaire contains questionable items, it will be forwarded to a health care professional for medical evaluation. The medical evaluation will be based on the Volunteer Firefighter Stress/Duty Statement (attachments 10.30, 10.31 and 10.32).

The health care professional may require a full physical (at the department's expense) or either accept or refuse the application based on the questionnaire information.

#### Fit Test and SPIRO

Based on the desired level of response, additional medical records review and examinations are required (Respiratory Protection Program ((RPP), at the expense of the department. The VFF Stress Statement (attachments 10.30, 10.31 and 10.32) will be the basis for the physician to make his/her determination on the applicant meeting the medical requirements.

Once the application has been approved and prior to the structure module, the PVFF will receive an RPP health questionnaire. The health questionnaire must be fully completed by the applicant and returned promptly. The candidate must then schedule a spirometry (lung capacity) test with the Butte County Public Health Department or other qualified provider approved by the department. A contract physician will evaluate the health questionnaire and spirometry test results.

The physician will approve, disapprove, or schedule a follow-up screening, based on the health questionnaire and spirometry test.

The fit test and SPIRO process is an annual testing requirement for full responders. Once the candidate completes this test he/she must contact the department Safety Officer to schedule a fit test.

All three items (RPP health questionnaire, spirometry test, and fit test) must be completed prior to attending the structure module and annually prior to January.

Failure to pass any medical examination required by the department will result in the applicant being dismissed.

#### Live Scan

All VFF's will be subjected to a DOJ/FBI criminal background check (Live Scan) as part of the application process. The department will cover the costs.

The department has the sole right to make a determination on the acceptance or rejection of an applicant based on the results of the live scan screening.

Examples of criminal offenses that are potential cause for rejection are (this is not an inclusive list):

- Some felony conviction (acts of violence, property crimes, etc.)
- Crimes involving children
- Domestic Violence
- Arson
- Embezzlement
- DUI within the last 3 years

The results of the Live Scan will be reviewed by the DOJ approved custodian of records prior to application approval.

#### Possible Cause for Applicant Rejection

- Age: Volunteer firefighters must be at least eighteen years of age. The applicant must produce a valid proof of age such as a driver's license.
- Convictions: Any criminal record will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. No member of a VFC will be on probation or parole.
- Medical Review: The medical examiner will review the information and situation and provide direction on a case-by-case basis.
- Insurance: Applicants are required to provide a current insurance affidavit meeting the minimum coverage limitations for their vehicle.
- Drivers License: Applicants are required to possess and maintain a current CA driver's license for the vehicle they operate. VFF's can not be on DMV probation and must have reliable transportation.

- Lying or providing false information on the application or health questionnaire

## **2.4 Probation**

A new applicant approved to begin firefighter training shall be considered a Probationary Volunteer Fire Fighter (PVFF). The PVFF shall serve a standard probationary period of 365 days from the date of application approval (seasonal firefighter employment after volunteer acceptance counts towards the probationary period). Successful completion of probation includes all mandatory training, specified drill attendance and one full year (no breaks in service) as a probationary firefighter.

Probationary firefighters will not be authorized to operate department or VFC apparatus unless they are a transfer and will not be able to vote on company business.

Transferring firefighters shall serve a standard 90-day VFC orientation probation period.

## **2.5 Transfers**

A VFC member in good standing who moves into another VFC's response area shall transfer to the appropriate VFC. The VFF wishing to transfer must completed the VFC transfer form 10.16.

All department certifications and equipment operator status will be honored at the receiving VFC. Prior to operating any equipment the transferring VFF must be checked off by the new VFC.

## **2.6 Termination Notifications**

Each Career Captain is responsible to keep the Battalion Chief and County Finance Officer informed of VFC roster changes via email.

It is important that VFF's who terminate volunteer status, regardless of cause, be immediately reported. Accurate and current information allows efficient management of VFF Workers Compensation Insurance costs.

## **2.7 Program Exit Evaluation**

Any volunteer firefighter, who leaves the department, voluntarily or not, will have the opportunity to fill out an exit evaluation (attachment 10.18, Separation Questionnaire). The former member should complete and mail the evaluation directly to the Fire Chief for review.

The Fire Chief should share exit evaluations with the respective Battalion Chief, Career and VFC Captain's.

## **2.8 Reinstatements**

After voluntary termination of firefighter status, a member may apply for reinstatement in a VFC.

The VFF will serve the standard probationary period and prior to response, comply with all training requirements based on the VFF's desired level of response.

If the break in service does not exceed 2 years, the previous department volunteer service time will be included in calculations of length of service seniority.

Re-instatements will require a new application package.

## **2.9 Retirement**

VFF's who retire from the department in good standing with more than 5 and less than 10 continuous years of active service will have the option of purchasing their badge with a "retired" rocker affixed. The VFC also has the option to purchase the badge for the retiring VFF.

VFF's who retire from the department in good standing with more than 10 continuous years of active service will receive their badge at the departments expense with a "retired" rocker affixed.

The above badge options are only available if the VFF's VFC adopted the department uniform and wore the department badge.

## **2.10 Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance**

All CAL FIRE firefighters must comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements. CAL FIRE Firefighters can not volunteer with the same unit that employs them. CAL FIRE seasonal firefighters that volunteer with the department when they are laid off are discouraged from serving in an elected VFC officer's capacity.

## **2.11 Physical Condition**

Applicants must be in good physical condition and able to perform the manipulative skills of the training requirements for his/her level of response.

Station level physical condition evaluations are limited to the VFF's ability to complete the basic evolutions contained within the departments Company Performance Standards (CPS) manual. The CPS manual shall be utilized as a general evaluation for the VFF's physical ability.

The above standards only apply to full responders.

## **2.12 Recruitment**

It is the policy of the department to actively support recruitment of new VFF's as an ongoing project where vacant VFF positions exist.

A recruitment effort should be made periodically by companies where VFF allotments are below the authorized number of VFF's. Recruitment efforts must be approved by the Battalion Chief and be in line with the department's staffing plan.

Typical recruitment methods include, but are not limited to:

- Personal contacts
- Radio advertisements
- Posters/flyers
- Newspaper advertisements
- Other methods approved by the Battalion Chief

Any written advertisement should have the approval of the Battalion Chief prior to being implemented. The departments Public Information Officer should also be informed of all recruitment efforts utilizing media outlets.

A focused recruitment program will be utilized by the department based on funding availability.