

# VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

## TOOLKIT





## Message from the Fire Marshal

Without doubt, human resources, particularly volunteers, are the fire service's most valuable assets. Time is also valuable. Unfortunately, both have limits. There are so many demands on time within a volunteer fire department that the leadership may not have enough of it to focus on maintaining a solid volunteer recruitment and retention program. This can impact on that other valuable commodity - having enough volunteers who will enjoy and continue to do the job well.

It is anticipated that by using some of the tools developed in this resource package, Municipal Fire Chiefs and community leaders will have at their disposal, a resource to simplify and guide their efforts in recruiting and retaining volunteers for delivering emergency services to their citizens. In return, Northwest Territories (NWT) communities will have the services of men and women who will derive great satisfaction in protecting their family and friends from harm. As our communities grow, the complexity and frequency of providing these services will increase, as will the necessity to obtain and keep competent and healthy numbers of volunteers. It is my hope that this toolbox of information will support and foster NWT communities in making these efforts a reality.



*C. Dewar*

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## Acknowledgements

In order to achieve success for this project, it was identified that stakeholder consultation was imperative in order to truly reflect the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of the fire service across the Northwest Territories (NWT). As a result, when started in mid-2013, this project sought the perspectives and brought together representatives from every region of the NWT, from different sizes and composition of fire departments and from municipal as well as fire service viewpoints. Through interviews, ongoing dialogue and a stakeholder workshop, these individuals contributed their opinions, ideas, resources and skills to shape this reference guide.

The Office of the Fire Marshal gratefully acknowledges the support and input from the following organizations and individuals.

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Special thanks to Ontario's Office of the Fire Marshal, whose excellent work in developing a similar tool (2006) has provided Municipal and Community Affairs enormous value and guidance in completing this resource.



## About This Resource

This booklet discusses effective practices, strategies, tools and templates.

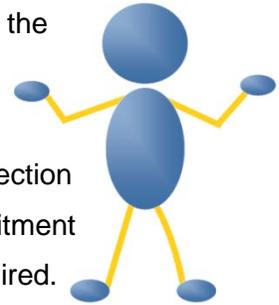
In the NWT, fire services depend substantially on volunteers. These are individuals who give freely of their personal time to ensure that residents are protected from fire or the threat of fire. They receive nominal consideration for their response and training efforts. There are many factors that contribute to the success of a volunteer recruitment and retention program. These include using good communications, recruitment, selection, hiring, training and retention practices.

This resource provides volunteers, Fire Chiefs, senior administrative staff, and community governments with an overview of best practices to consider in the recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters. It was developed to assist individuals responsible for the recruitment and retention of volunteer fire service personnel. The stakeholders who have developed this package have done background research and identified effective strategies and practices for volunteer recruitment and retention efforts in the NWT. The end result is this comprehensive, flexible and convenient collection of practices and tools.

This package provides strategies and tools that may be used to implement a volunteer recruitment and retention program. This does not mean that every fire service must use every tool and template. You are encouraged to modify the information based on your needs and the amount of time you can invest in this important activity.

## Where do I Start?

It is suggested you take a moment to reflect on your current practices. Conduct the self-assessment to identify your fire service's strengths and practices and consider what approach to take in relation to recruitment and retention. Once you have identified the information you need, you can then go to that specific section of the resource book. The tools and templates for each component of the recruitment and retention program can be removed from the book and photocopied as required.



## Take a Moment to Reflect

The following “quick review” is based on the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement - Values, Guiding Principles and Standards of Practice. It provides you with an overview of effective practices for volunteer recruitment and retention. It will identify the strengths of your program and provide you with ideas on how you can improve efforts.

<b>GENERAL</b>
Does your fire department: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Have an individual(s) responsible for recruiting?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow an annual recruitment and retention plan?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use other resources to assist in recruitment and retention efforts?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Review and update recruitment and retention tools?</li></ul>
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>
Before recruiting, does your fire department determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Why your fire department is recruiting?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> How many individuals you require?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Who you are going to recruit?</li></ul> Does your fire department: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Communicate expectations, role descriptions and other relevant information?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a variety of communication methods for recruitment?</li></ul>

## SELECTION

Does your fire department have a selection process that includes:

- An application form and job requirements?
- Consideration for family, employer and significant others?

## ORIENTATION

Does your fire department:

- Conduct a formal orientation for new recruits?
- Does it include an introduction to your mission and values, schedules, policies and operating procedures?

## TRAINING

Does your department establish a training schedule and approach that:

- Has an attendance expectation?
- Is stimulating and fun?
- Is relevant and realistic?
- Is diverse and varied?
- Is scheduled in advance throughout the year?
- Is based on an accepted industry standard or curriculum?

## RETENTION

Does your fire department have effective leadership practices such as:

- Involving members in developing and fulfilling the mission, goals and objectives and ensuring these are communicated,
- Resolving conflict and addressing ideas or concerns,
- Effective, fair and equitable supervision?

Does your fire department allow volunteers to contribute to the department in a meaningful and productive way, such as:

- Assigning tasks and duties fairly?
- Assigning tasks that are "out of the hot zone" for those who prefer or are capable of logistical and support tasks during an incident?
- Offering a variety of non-traditional tasks such as public education, prevention, and administration to those who are not interested in emergency response?
- Establishing and communicating attendance expectations?

- Using availability lists or other strategies to ensure sufficient response?

Does your fire department use a recognition program that:

- Identifies the type of behaviour that you would like to reward and includes all members?
- Establishes criteria for the performance or contribution that the department strives for?
- Are understandable to the volunteer and defensible for management?
- Are planned to be a one-time event, or a sustainable program?
- Recognizes the support and encouragement of significant others, families and employers?

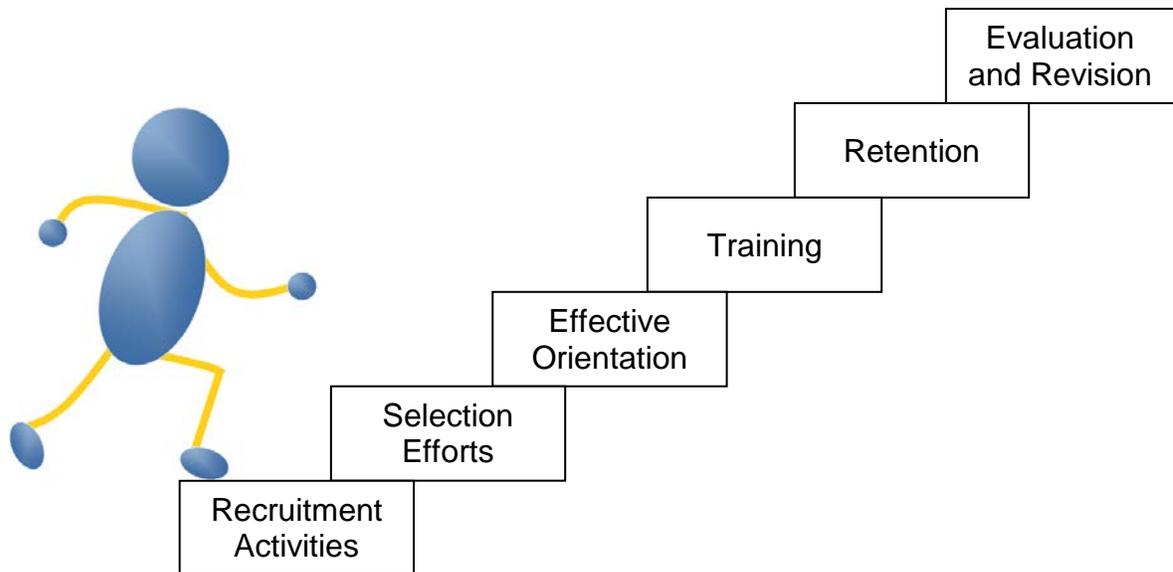
## EVALUATION

Does your fire department:

- Review fire department needs to help plan future volunteer recruitment activities?
- Review success of previous efforts?
- Discuss future needs with members and Council?

# VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAM

Establishing and using a recruitment and retention program will increase the likelihood of finding and keeping the right people for the right tasks. Components of a volunteer recruitment and retention program include resources and tools that support the following:



## The Benefits

A coordinated, organized program demonstrates good leadership within your department, and your commitment to recognize volunteers. It will help you to identify shortfalls and availability of volunteers in the community and the number, type and quality of volunteers needed now and in the future. It will also allow you to plan for recruitment and selection, retention and succession, and training and development of volunteers.

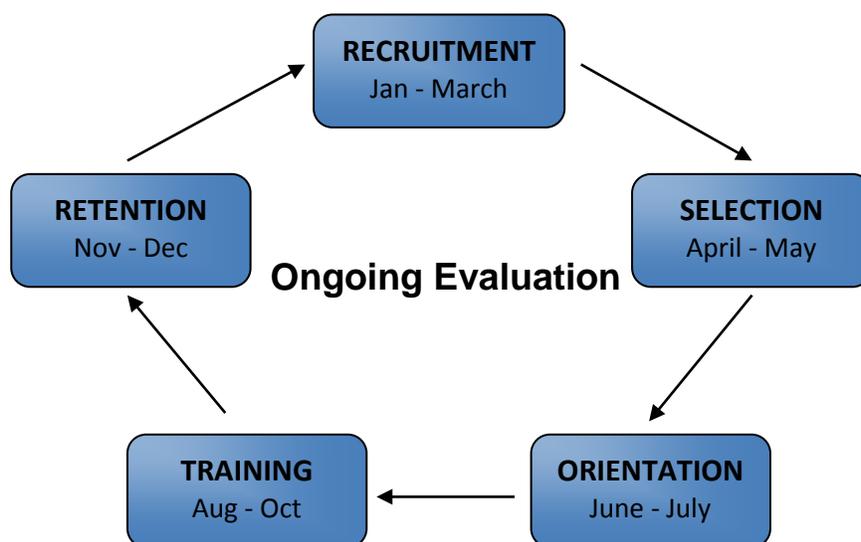
## Responsibility for Recruitment

Leaders in the fire service face many competing priorities. If responsibility for recruitment and retention is not assigned to an individual or group, the program could fall to the wayside. This may lead to reduced membership, reduced emergency response capabilities, reduced fire prevention, inspection and public education activities and a diminished pool of candidates to draw from.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers does take effort. Creating a committee, training them and assigning specific tasks can alleviate some of the pressure on the leadership to complete all of these tasks, as well as creating opportunities for others to contribute to the growth of the department.

## The Annual Plan

A recruitment and retention plan typically follows an annual cycle. It is an ongoing process that assists you in planning and focusing your efforts. It considers different periods throughout the year involving a variety of specific events and activities.



## Evaluation

Evaluation of your recruitment and retention program is necessary to identify strengths and areas to improve. It provides useful feedback regarding your efforts and identifies what you've done well, and where you would like to improve. Don't save your evaluation for the end of the year. It should be an ongoing process, which is built into all the components of your program.

When developing your evaluation, consider not only your department's needs, but also those of the volunteers and the community. Questions to consider:

- The image of the department and if the department is meeting expectations,
- If the individuals volunteering are the right fit,
- If membership reflects the community,
- If the department's leadership supports and encourages individuals to remain,

- The retention rate; and,
- The success of specific components in the program or specific strategies.

Methods for evaluation could include: SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), community stakeholder consultation, volunteer satisfaction surveys and exit interviews.

## **Records Management**

The management of records involves organizing and controlling documents to ensure that they are quickly and easily accessible, protected for confidentiality, accessed by only those with authority and are archived or disposed of when necessary. Seek guidance from your municipal government officials to determine your records management practices.

Identify records that must be maintained, where they are located and who has access to them. The following information garnered during selection, hiring and ongoing tenure may be kept in the volunteer's personnel file:

- Application,
- Interview records,
- Offer letter,
- Orientation checklist,
- Initial training checklists and assessments,
- Equipment inventory,
- Graduation certificate,
- Oath of commitment, pledge of service or other induction paperwork,
- Training records,
- Supervision notes,
- Performance Evaluations, and;
- A record to track recognition so it is not repeated for the same goal.

## **Support from your Municipal Council**

An important consideration in your review and development of a volunteer recruitment and retention program is the support of council. Providing these decision makers with relevant

information will assist them in making an informed decision to support your recruitment and retention efforts.

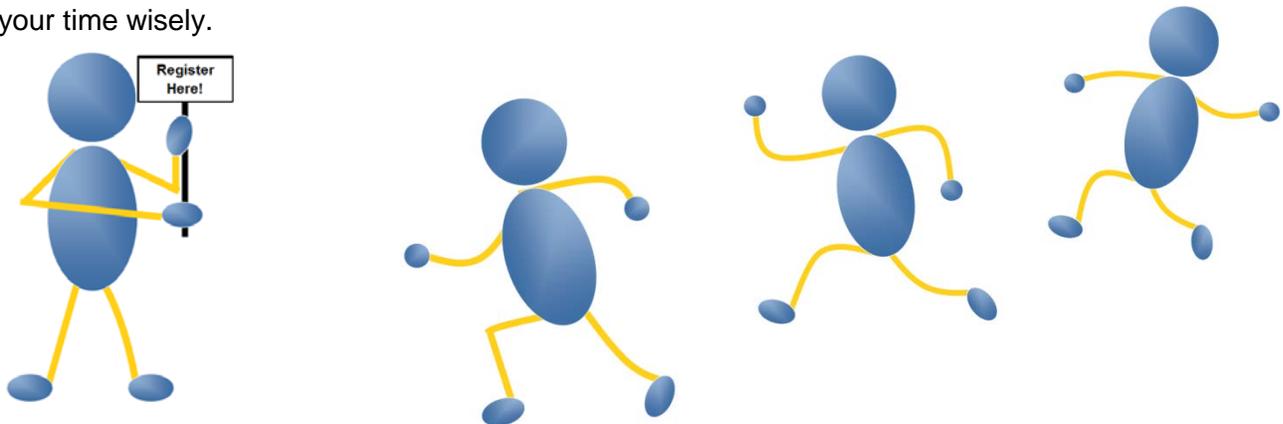
Council may be asked to support or endorse any number of strategies put forth by your fire service including: providing resources or expertise to determine the maximum number of volunteers retained by your department, financing recruitment efforts, financing initial and ongoing development, and financing recognition programs or incentives for volunteers.

The value of your fire service's contribution to public safety can be demonstrated through benchmarks such as inspection statistics, public education program results, or emergency response reports. You can use this information to demonstrate how current volunteers are meeting the public safety goals of the department and to enhance efforts through additional membership.

Providing council with relevant statistics and information will assist them to make informed decisions and contribute to good communications and relations between your fire service and your council.

# RECRUITMENT

In order to be successful in recruiting the right people for the right job at the right time, there are two questions to ask before you begin to recruit. **Why** are we recruiting? **Who** are we recruiting? Asking yourself these questions will prepare you to focus your recruitment efforts and spend your time wisely.



## Why?

Conduct an assessment to determine the needs of your fire department. This will help you answer the question “Why?”

- Take a look at your department and its existing membership. What are its capabilities?
- Does your department’s capabilities meet the needs identified?
- If not, then this is the need.
- Focus your recruitment efforts to address that need.

When conducting your assessment, look beyond the traditional “fire suppression” perspective. The following roles (and many others) not only contribute to a fire department’s broader mission through better administration and logistical support, they can also enhance response capabilities, inspection programs and public education activities. This approach puts to use the resources that are available in your community.

- Firefighting and Rescue
- Emergency Medical Response
- Public Education, Teaching and Training

- Public and Media Relations
- Photography, Graphic Arts and Publishing
- Emergency Vehicle Drivers and Operators
- Fire Safety Inspections
- Office Duties and Administration
- Radio and Telephone Communications and Dispatch
- Mechanics and Maintenance
- Human Resource Administration
- Information Technology
- Fundraising and Events Coordination

It is also helpful to be clear regarding the roles, the skills and knowledge that you are recruiting by providing a brief role description for each.

## Who?

In order to answer this question, you need to know and understand the availability of potential volunteers in your community. Involving employees that work in your community - youth, elders, families, individuals with disabilities, and various ethnic groups offer many mutual benefits. These individuals are provided with opportunities to develop skills, gain knowledge and contribute to their community in a meaningful way.



The department benefits by having a diverse and vibrant stock of resources, knowledge, skills and perspectives that reflect the community, which in turn, further strengthens the department. This information will assist you to successfully recruit for volunteers that will meet both the departments' needs for specific roles and the community's need to connect and collaborate for the common good.

You can also conduct a profile of the employers in the community to identify potential employers that may support volunteerism and assist members to be able to meet time commitments.

Consider as well the expectations of your department regarding hours. How many hours is the average volunteer expected to contribute to your department? If you do training once per week for 3 hours, that's 156 hours annually. This doesn't include expectations for calls, public education events or other requirements. Are there individuals in your community who can commit to those requirements? How can your fire department assist members to meet these expectations?

## Youth in the Fire Service

By involving youth, your fire service benefits from a vibrant, energetic, enthusiastic and motivated source of volunteers. The youth benefit by gaining valuable life skills such as problem solving, crisis management and communication, in addition to technical skills that are relevant to the particular volunteer roles.



Considerations for safety and understanding the developmental stages and maturity of youth volunteers are necessary in order to establish a successful youth program. You may want to consider a minimum age requirement. Determine meaningful tasks that can be safely accomplished by youth. Identify necessary training requirements. Assess risks for each role and set limits for exposures to those risks that are appropriate to the age, skills and knowledge of the youth. Ensure adequate supervision is available. Keep in mind that there are other

opportunities, beyond suppression and emergency response that may be considered for youth volunteers.

If you are interested in involving youth volunteers, there are several references that provide information regarding restrictions and safety for youth. Human Resources Development Canada identifies minimum age for employment in several occupations at [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/cli/eslc/minage\(e\).pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/lp/spila/cli/eslc/minage(e).pdf).

Ensure your fire department offers an organized, efficient environment that is not too overwhelming to youth. Provide a work setting where youth are welcomed, treated with respect and are provided with an opportunity to learn and grow.

During recruitment and retention efforts, you will need to demonstrate that the volunteer opportunity is:

- Flexible and offers a choice of short and long term opportunities.
- Meaningful, in that the volunteer is making a significant difference.
- Accessible and responsive to the youth's needs.
- Educational, offering opportunities to gain valuable life skills and job related skills.
- Rewarding, identifying the types of incentives, rewards, references and potential connections to future employers.
- Enjoyable, offering a variety of training and experiences in which to learn new things and meet new people.



## Women in the Fire Service

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of women among the ranks of fire services. However, this number is still low in comparison to other volunteer opportunities.

The well-known physical requirements of suppression and rescue tasks can limit the potential for individuals to apply. Understandably, for safe and efficient operations, these requirements are a necessity.

Fair and equitable physical testing that is reflective of role specific tasks will ensure that you recruit men and women that are capable of safely and competently completing those tasks.

Consider as well that there are many other important and relevant positions within the fire service for women and men who do not have the physical ability for the fire suppression role.

Childcare and family responsibilities are other common challenges. You can alleviate some of this stress by offering leaves of absence for family purposes, and assisting or supporting families to find childcare options.

During your recruitment efforts, you may want to have females representing the fire department speaking to women about the role of women in the fire service, the opportunities and benefits of involvement and the fire department's commitment to addressing challenges and barriers faced by women.

To promote active volunteering for a long term, involve female members in discussions to identify their specific challenges and problem solve solutions to overcome those challenges.



## **Elders in the Fire Service**

More and more individuals will be retiring and most of them will still be healthy, active and capable of volunteering. Now that they have the time, many will consider volunteering as a way to stay active, stay in touch and to contribute to their community.

The knowledge, skills and experience that this population brings can be invaluable to the fire service. They will come from diverse backgrounds: labourers, professionals, sales, front line workers, management and administration.

Despite those differences, they will have similar reasons for volunteering. Most will be seeking opportunities to be challenged, to continue to learn and grow and to use their skills and abilities to help others.

They will also have similar expectations regarding the volunteer experience. Having come out of the labour force, from a variety of backgrounds, most will have high expectations for the leadership, organization and practices of the fire service. They will have strong values and opinions and will want to be provided with opportunity to share input. They will be seeking flexibility in scheduling and possibly short-term projects that will allow them to enjoy their retirement and leisure time. They will want to be provided with opportunity to not only share their skills, knowledge and experience, but also to continue to learn new skills and have new experiences.

If you wish to draw on this resource, you will need to demonstrate that you are responsive to those needs and expectations.

## **Volunteers with Disabilities**

Volunteers with disabilities are not common in the fire service, partly due to the mistaken perception that the fire service is not an environment where they can excel. Fire departments that currently involve people with disabilities can tell you that this perception is far from true.

Creating inclusive and accessible volunteer opportunities can provide many mutual benefits to the fire service and the individual. This often-untapped resource is brimming with ability, knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and commitment. The individual benefits by gaining an opportunity to gain experience, life skills and job related abilities.

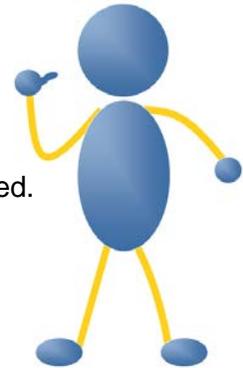
In order to successfully create an environment that is welcoming, accessible and inclusive, consult with the individual to design roles using strength based planning to capitalize on the skills of the individual, while accommodating limitations.

## Matching the Role and the Volunteer

Once you have the above information, it will be easier for you to plan your recruitment. In order to effectively recruit volunteers, it may be necessary to identify your target group. Targeting your recruitment may increase your chances of success.

The following matching process illustrates how to do this.

- Review your needs assessment and identify the role that needs to be filled.
- Identify the skills, attributes and knowledge that the role requires.
- Look at the profiles of community members and employers.
- Target those individuals most likely to have those skills.
- Use communication tools that will best attract the type of individual you are looking for.
- Begin your recruitment.



## The Message

Market your fire department in a manner that draws the attention of potential volunteers and clearly communicates the department's role in bringing community members together and making the community stronger and safer.

Make the community aware of all the contributions that the fire department makes. Let the volunteer nature of the fire department be known to the community and let the community know their help is needed.

Current volunteers are a good source for marketing your department. If you welcome them, support them and train them well, they will tell others. They are the most likely to be able to explain the requirements (and benefits) of joining.

However, relying solely on word of mouth can limit the number and variety of individuals invited and involved in your department. To promote diversity and involve volunteers with different skill sets, knowledge and perspectives, rely on more than one method.

Communications should be both attention-getting and informative. They may be the first impression that a potential volunteer has of your department. The strategy must demonstrate that the position is interesting, challenging and beneficial to both the individual and the community.

There are many recruiting strategies that your fire department can choose from. When deciding on a strategy, ask yourself:

- Who is representing the department and how will they do this?
- Who is the intended audience? Is it the general public or a target population?
- What message is the department going to communicate?
- Do I need other resources such as media, posters, and ads?
- Does it talk about the benefits and rewards of joining?

Recruitment strategies and activities can include:

INTERACTIVE	MEDIA	NETWORKS & OTHER SOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays</li> <li>• Open houses</li> <li>• Public venues</li> <li>• Word of mouth</li> <li>• Radio interviews</li> <li>• Membership drives</li> <li>• Person to person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web pages and email</li> <li>• Media (radio, print, TV)</li> <li>• Signs, brochures, flyers</li> <li>• Bill boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre fire service classes</li> <li>• Youth and School Volunteers</li> <li>• Employer Supported Volunteers</li> <li>• NWT Fire Chief’s Association</li> <li>• NWT Association of Communities</li> </ul>

## Direct Approach

Use the direct approach to appeal to a potential volunteer. Few people will step forward on their own initiative but they will often respond to a face-to-face request. When you approach a candidate, pay attention to how the candidate responds. Some candidates might refuse but still say that they have some interest. If so approach them again at a later date to see if they have changed their mind.

Be clear about the expectations and commitments of the volunteer position. If you make things sound better than they really are, the person may get frustrated and leave the department. Develop a standard approach so that all potential volunteers are told the same things.

## Accepting Applications and Follow Up

Make it easy for individuals to pursue their interest by having role descriptions and application forms readily available. Follow up with interested individuals or community volunteers.

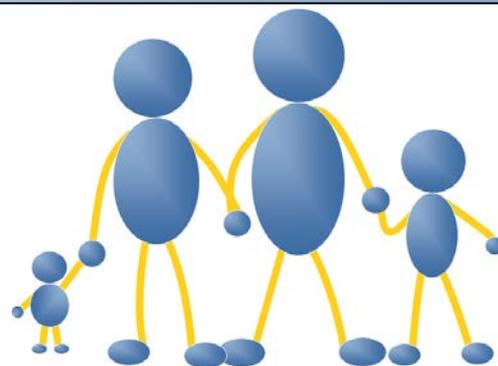
If any member of your department has contact with someone interested in the fire service, have them forward his or her name and phone number to the individual(s) responsible for recruitment. Contact the interested party directly and provide an application form.

Regardless of which method has brought the individual to your doorstep, ensure that you follow up with any interested individuals who have completed the application form. An application form collects basic information, name, address, experience, and schooling. Ensure that the application form only asks for information related to the requirements of the position. Using an application form signals the seriousness of the fire department's recruitment efforts. It also starts the necessary paper trail.

All applications should be promptly acknowledged. It may be a poor reflection on the department when interested parties don't know the status of their application until the recruit training has started without them.

## Family and Employers

The fire department will expect a great deal from its volunteers. Understandably, being an active member competes with many priorities in an individual's life. Two of those priorities are family and employment.



It is important to ensure families are aware of the expectations, commitments and psychological impact that are involved in volunteering with the fire department. Information nights, handouts and meetings are ways to provide family or significant others with the knowledge they need to support the individual.

For these same reasons, it is also beneficial for the volunteer to have an informed and understanding employer. Some departments provide an information sheet that the employer signs to indicate that they are aware of the obligations of the volunteer and would support him/her in any manner possible.

## **Ongoing Recruitment**

Successful recruitment efforts are ongoing throughout the year. This will ensure that you consistently have a number of interested individuals to draw from. You may want to incorporate seasonal messages to draw the attention of potential volunteers.

## **Additional Resources**

- Sample Fire Department Annual Recruitment and Retention Plan
- Planning and Targeting Your Recruitment Efforts
- Role Description Overviews
- Brainstorming Worksheet: Who Do You Know?
- Open House Planning Sheet
- Template For Recruitment Ads

## Sample Fire Department Annual Recruitment and Retention Plan

TIMELINE	TASKS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
<b>Recruitment</b>		
January to March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Familiarize yourself with the annual recruit plan;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete needs assessment (see template) for your fire department;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete the community profile;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review role descriptions to identify target population for recruitment;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Complete recruitment needs sheet;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review preparation checklist;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare or organize materials for advertising and marketing (i.e. web pages, newspaper ads, flyers, brochures);</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Verify pre-recruit open house time, date and location;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Validate department personnel, officers, fire fighters and non-operational volunteers attendance and roles at pre-recruit open house;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange handout package including applications for pre-recruit open house; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have application forms available.</li> </ul>	<p>Fire Chief with assistance from Officers and support and guidance from Senior Administration Officer (SAO).</p> <p>If necessary, budget approval is acquired from Council.</p>
<b>Selection</b>		
April to May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Screen applications and determine candidates to be interviewed;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct screening tests as appropriate;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work with candidates to schedule interviews (date, time, location, attendees);</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct interviews and select candidates; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Collect all necessary paperwork and human resource information from candidates.</li> </ul>	<p>Fire Chief with assistance from community government human resources staff as necessary.</p>
<b>Orientation</b>		

TIMELINE	TASKS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
June to August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize and schedule recruit orientation session(s);</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce new volunteers to other department members or identify a contact "go to" person or mentor;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Introduce recruits to the vision, mission and values for the department;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Familiarize recruits with current policies and operating procedures; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure completion of human resources paperwork.</li> </ul>	Fire Chief and Officers/members with assistance from community government human resources staff.
<b>Training</b>		
September to October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule initial training to help build human resource and role specific skills;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure ongoing participation in regularly scheduled training;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate industry standard technical training for volunteers; and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Periodically engage volunteers on progress and challenges.</li> </ul>	Fire Chief, Officers, and School of Community Government.
<b>Retention</b>		
November to December ( <i>and ongoing</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Manage performance;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate individual progress;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge and reward desired behaviors and accomplishments.</li> </ul>	Fire Chief, Training Officer and Officers

## **Planning and Targeting Your Recruitment Efforts**

### **Step 1      *Identify the Needs***

1. Identify position titles (use an existing one if it fits, or develop another one). See the Role Description Summary Tool for examples.
2. For each position, identify a more specific role description (use an existing one, or develop one). See template for Role Descriptions.
3. Review the Role Description to identify the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities (both mandatory and preferred).

### **Step 2      *Create a Community Profile***

1. Identify your community's assets. What talents and resources relevant to the role exist in the community?
2. Foster collaboration and partnerships with community groups or employers where possible.
3. To truly reflect the community you serve, and cast the widest net possible, look beyond the obvious. Be creative in identifying "pockets" of the population. Seek to recruit members of diverse ethnicities, genders, ages, backgrounds, education levels and physical capabilities.

### **Step 3      *Target Your Recruitment***

1. Identify the number of recruits that you will need to fill the number of member positions. Is there a limit to the number of volunteers you can have?
2. Identify how the department can make the recruitment process accessible to audiences with different language and educational backgrounds.
3. Identify community partners that can help to recruit members.
4. Identify the most likely ways to provide the target population with information about the need for volunteers, community events and opportunities to contribute to not only the fire department, but the community as well. (Posters, brochures, internet, etc.).
5. Identify locations that you would encounter and or find the target member population.
6. Identify and communicate skills, experience, and/or benefits that a volunteer might gain as a result of volunteering? What about the department would interest and motivate them?

**Step 1 – Identify Needs**

See Role Description Summary in this package or existing ones in your department.

<b>Priority Need</b>	<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Key Duties</b>	<b>Qualities, Abilities, Skills, Knowledge and Availability Required</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

**Steps 2-3 – Profile Your Community, Target Your Recruitment**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Qualities, Availability, Skills, Ability and Knowledge Required</b>	<b>Who is in the community that has these attributes?</b>	<b>Who to ask? What to say to them? Where to find them?</b>
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

# Role Description Overviews

## ***Firefighter***

Reports To: Senior Firefighter or Fire Chief

### Duties and Responsibilities

- Responds to emergency calls;
- Responds to non-emergency calls, as required;
- Provides search and rescue, as required;
- Drives and operates firefighting and emergency equipment, as assigned;
- Conducts fire prevention inspections and public education programs, as assigned;
- Attends on-duty training sessions and off-site training courses, as required;
- Participates in community fire prevention events;
- Maintains equipment and facilities; and
- Performs other duties as required.

### Qualifications

- Comfortable around machinery;
- Ability to undertake manual labour;
- Drivers licence is desirable;
- Willingness to obtain First Aid training; and
- Willingness to obtain firefighting certification.

### Time Required

- Usually one night per week; plus more in case of response to emergencies.

## ***Senior Firefighter***

Reports To: Fire Chief

### Duties and Responsibilities

- Responds to emergency calls;
- Responds to non-emergency calls, as required;
- Provides search and rescue, as required;
- Supervises fire fighters during an emergency or other event;
- Drives and operates firefighting and emergency equipment, as assigned;
- Attends on-duty training sessions and off-site training courses;
- Conducts training for firefighters and other persons;
- Conducts fire prevention inspections;
- Prepares and delivers public education presentations;
- Participates in community fire prevention events;
- Oversees the maintenance of equipment and the Fire Hall; and
- Performs other duties as required.

### Qualifications

- Basic reading and writing skills;
- Ability to keep simple records and prepare reports;
- Mechanical aptitude (i.e., good with hands or machines);
- Ability to do manual labour;
- Good understanding of Fire Departmental responsibilities; and
- Valid driver's licence.

### Time Required

Usually one night per week, plus more in case of emergencies.

## ***Fire Prevention Officer***

Reports To: Fire Chief

### Duties and Responsibilities

- Inspects buildings and new construction for fire risks;
- Inspects and tests fire suppression and extinguishing systems;
- Helps firefighters with fire prevention inspections;
- Participates in fire prevention and educational programs and gives instruction in fire prevention;
- Performs administrative duties (including budget preparation, maintenance of records, etc.); and
- May help train other Fire Department staff.

### Qualifications

- Basic reading, writing and office skills;
- Ability to deal with a wide range of people;
- Reliable attendance at Fire Department activities;
- Practical experience with firefighting; and
- Valid driver's license.

### Time Required

- Usually one night per week, plus more in case of emergencies or other events.

## ***Fire Chief***

Reports To: Senior Administrative Officer

### Duties and Responsibilities

- Responds to emergency calls and assists in search-and-rescue, as required;
- Directs volunteer firefighters on scene and in training;
- Coordinates training and emergency planning with other agencies, as required;

- Investigates and reports on fires in the municipality, including incidence, injuries, and damage to property;
- Inspects businesses and other facilities for compliance with fire code and regulations;
- Manages firefighter recruitment and training;
- Inspects fire department equipment on a regular basis;
- Evaluates the needs for programs, facilities, personnel, and equipment, as required;
- Develops and presents budget requests and policy recommendations;
- Participates in fire prevention and educational programs, and gives instruction in fire prevention; and
- Performs administrative duties and other duties as required.

### Qualifications

- Knowledge of firefighting techniques and methods (including training methods);
- Knowledge of management techniques (e.g., command-and-control, crowd control);
- Strong leadership and decision-making skills;
- Ability to deal effectively with people in difficult situations;
- Basic office skills including reading and writing;
- Ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, with a wide range of people;
- Ability to maintain an effective working relationship with government, businesses, and the general public; and
- Possession of a valid driver's licence.

### Time Required

- Time commitment varies;
- A minimum of one night per week, plus more in case of emergencies; and
- Administrative duties may increase this amount.

### **Other Roles**

#### Apparatus and Equipment Maintenance Personnel

These fire department members may be either operational or non-operational. It is the responsibility of these personnel to ensure that all fire apparatus and equipment is maintained in fully operational condition. Other duties can include and are not limited to developing and

carrying out maintenance programs, reviewing and providing advice on specifications for new equipment, accident investigation and station maintenance.

### Communication Personnel

Often the first contact with the fire department, communications personnel must have traits and characteristics demonstrating a high level of professionalism and empathy. Communication personnel must ensure that they have the correct information in order to send the appropriate response. They may provide logistical support, must maintain radio communications, be able to process incident documentation, keep current and have sound knowledge on the use of communication devices, perform public relations and public education duties along with technical and administrative duties.

### Administrative/Clerical Personnel

The duties assigned to administrative / clerical personnel are extremely varied and encompassing. Record keeping, filing, research, note taking, accounting, budgeting, answering telephone inquiries are just some of the tasks that may be assigned. Organization and public relation skills are necessary for these positions as interaction with the public may be frequent. Consideration should be given to those with proficiency with computers and business equipment.

### IT Support Personnel

Technological skills are essential for these support personnel. Creating and maintaining websites, inter and intra net sites, repairs, specifying and repairing computers, pagers, radio and telecommunications equipment are all areas that would be included in the duties assigned.

### Emergency Medical Services/Emergency Patient Care Responders

EMS first responders play a vital role in the continuum of care at emergency scenes. This is a particularly important role in areas where there may be a delay in transfer to a medical facility. They would be expected to have the minimum level of training as deemed by applicable service standards.



## Brainstorming Worksheet: Who Do You Know?

Identify three friends, neighbours or coworkers who aren't a member of the fire service.

Name	Skills and Knowledge	What can they do for the Fire Service?	Recommend?	How will you approach them? What will you say?



## Open House Planning Sheet

<p><b>Reason</b></p> <p>Identify reason for open house          General recruitment?          Role specific recruitment?</p>			
<p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Estimate who will be attending and numbers.          Potential recruits,          children, spouses,          Council</p>			
<p><b>Invitations</b></p> <p>Identify who will be invited and how.</p>			
<p><b>Date, time and location</b></p> <p>Identify date, time and location of event.          Determine best time for this, where you will get the most attendance.</p>			
<b>Program content or topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Supplies</b>
Welcome and overview *	Chief	5	
Introduction to fire service *	Chief	10	
Fire department expectations *	Chief, deputy, training officer	15	
Fire fighter presentation *	Front line fire fighters	10	
Family/significant other presentation*	Family member representative	10	

Questions and answers*	Chief	10	
<b>Logistics Required</b>		Person responsible	
<input type="checkbox"/> Computers <input type="checkbox"/> Projector <input type="checkbox"/> Applications <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant literature <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph's <input type="checkbox"/> Cameras for photos <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments <input type="checkbox"/> Parking <input type="checkbox"/> Signage <input type="checkbox"/> Static displays			
<b>Personnel briefing</b> Prior to open house, review agenda with speakers		Person responsible	

***Program content and topic suggestions***

**Welcome and overview:**

- Welcomes those present;
- Introduces special guests, i.e. deputy chief, members of council or committee;
- Notes the location of the fire exits and washrooms;
- Introduces master of ceremony if there is one and if so, turns program over to them;
- Explain the purpose of the presentation;
- Advise the recruitment process and any cut off dates for applications to be received;
- Explain format of evening presentation and the availability to speak to others after the program;

**Introduction to Fire Service:**

- Provide a brief biography of your service in the department and why you have stayed on as long as you have;
- Describe the history of the fire service in the community;
- Describe the department personnel complement;
- Describe the location of the fire stations and any history related to them;
- Describe the boundaries of the department and any service provided to other communities or received from other communities;
- Touch on council / board / committee involvement and where funding to operate the department comes from;
- Explain the different positions in the department and the importance of each and every one of them;

- Briefly explain any remuneration and benefits programs firefighters would be entitled to.

**Fire department expectations:**

- Elaborate on what the fire department expects from the recruit, i.e. commitment, sense of responsibility, willingness to respond when called upon, dedication to do a good job, teamwork;
- Explain training schedule and time commitments;
- Review post recruitment annual requirements relating to number of calls required to be in attendance at, minimal number of training sessions required and other duties or assignments.

***What can the recruit expect from the fire department?***

- Explain that the fire service is providing them with the opportunity to make a difference in the community;
- The potential to become a member of a group that can be counted upon in a time of need;
- The opportunity to demonstrate their personal capabilities;
- Respect;
- A fair and unbiased assessment;
- The opportunity to grow;
- Potential opportunity to use the skills and knowledge in other work environments;
- The opportunity to be a valuable member of the community that others will call upon in their time of need.

***Fire fighter presentation:***

- What is the presenter's current employment;
- Why did the presenter join the fire service;
- How long did it take before being accepted into the recruitment process;
- What if any obstacles were overcome;
- What satisfaction is received when helping out someone;
- How is the time commitment handled;
- What opportunities presented themselves;
- What opportunities were missed including social and family engagements;
- Explain that the person you're helping out may be a family member, neighbor or a friend.

***Family/significant other presentation:***

- Describe how family commitments are handled;
- What opportunities were realized when partner joined the fire service;
- What mechanisms are available to assist in coping with the stress often associated with being in the fire service;
- Describe how you assist the partner after a traumatic or troubling call;
- Describe the pride the family has with the member being a part of the fire service;
- Discuss the networking that takes place within the family members;
- Elaborate on any department activities that assist the family.



# Template for Recruitment Ads

## **Newsletter, Website, Radio Ad:**

### VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL

*{Name of fire department}* is currently accepting applications for the position of *{name of position}*.

The primary responsibilities of this position include:

*{Provide a brief description of primary duties}*.

Applicants must meet the following minimum criteria:

*{List eligibility criteria}*

We will be hosting an information session on *{date, time and location}*.

For more information, or to pick up an application, please contact:

*{List contact information}*.

## **Slogans and Catch Phrases**

Be creative. Have a slogan contest. Do a website search.

Here are a few phrases pulled of the Internet.

- Protect your dreams...Volunteer
- Members Needed! Stop in *{DATE}* or call *{XXX-XXXX}*
- Need Volunteers – Will Train
- Volunteers Needed! Apply Inside
- Open 24 hours – We never close!
- Our family helping yours – whatever it takes.
- Take action...Volunteer!
- What have you done for your community today?
- Making house calls since *{founding date of department}*
- Neighbours helping Neighbours...Volunteer Today.
- Volunteer...It's the experience of a lifetime.
  
- Quality Training....Free; Equipment...Free; Membership Fee...Free; Saving a Life....Priceless



# SELECTION

Screening helps you decide whether an individual possesses the minimum requirements for the position. Your fire department will have to decide which screening tools are appropriate and necessary to ensure individuals are the right fit for the role, and to allow individuals an opportunity to determine the department is the right fit for them:

- Application form,
- Interviews,
- Minimum requirements,
- Physical and agility testing,
- Written and oral testing,
- Criminal background checks,
- Medical certificates,
- Driver's abstracts,
- Reference checks, and
- Consideration for family, employer and significant others.



## Tests

To ensure the right fit for specific roles, you may want to consider simple tests for verbal or written communication, or other tests such as:

- Communicator/dispatcher: a test requiring him or her to work in a distracting environment.
- Driver: a map reading or direction test.
- Administrative support person: a test that measures writing, typing or filing skills.
- Fire fighter a perception test.



## Interviews

Interviews are an important step in the selection process. They are a two-way exchange of information, which gives the department enough information to judge whether or not the applicant is best suited to the role. At the same time, interviews allow the applicant to make a judgment about the fire department.

The interview provides you with an opportunity to get to know the individual better and find out information about his/her background, talents, skills, interests and availability. It also allows you to clearly identify expectations and convey the norms of the fire department, up front, to determine if the individual is a good fit.

An effective interview is:

- Structured: Ensure that relevant information is obtained.
- Consistent: Use the same process and questions for all applicants.

- **Clear:** Explain the interview, screening and selection process. Describe the position and make your selection based on the requirements of the position. Know in advance what responses are considered favourable or unfavourable.
- **Fair and transparent:** Where possible, have at least two people conduct the interview (but not too many to prevent intimidation).
- **Timely:** There is nothing gained by extending an interview; fatigue and frustration may set in.

## **Driver's Abstracts**

For insurance and risk management reasons, completing a driver's abstract, available from the Department of Transportation, is imperative, particularly if individuals are going to be using expensive, big, heavy, complicated emergency vehicles. This is a requirement of some insurance companies.

## **The Offer Letter**

Those individuals selected to volunteer with your fire department require timely notification and information regarding orientation, training and other expectations of the fire department. You can do so through a telephone conversation, followed by a written offer letter.

## **Additional Resources**

- Sample Application Form
- Sample Fire Department Criteria for Eligibility
- Sample Interview Questions
- Sample Invitation Letter



## Sample Application Form (Please Print)

<b>Personal Information</b>		
Confidential when completed		
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Given Name</b>	<b>Initial</b>
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>	<b>Business</b>
<b>Emergency Contact</b>		<b>Emergency Contact Telephone</b>
<b>What position did you apply for?</b>		
<b>Volunteer Eligibility Requirements</b>		
<b>What hours would you be available?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekdays <input type="checkbox"/> Weekends <input type="checkbox"/> Weeknights <input type="checkbox"/> Other?	<b>Are you legally eligible to work in Canada?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Do you meet Eligibility Requirements?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are you able to understand oral and written English?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Are you able to understand oral and written (<i>specify official language</i>)?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Other Languages?</b> Describe:
<b>Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence for which you have not received a pardon?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No   Describe:		

## Employment Experience

### Present Employer:

Position:

Name:

How long have you been employed there?

Address:

Duties:

Telephone:

May we contact this employer?

Yes  No

### Previous Employer:

Position:

Name:

How long were you employed there?

Address:

Duties:

Telephone:

May we contact this employer?

Yes  No

### Previous Employer:

Position:

Name:

How long were you employed there?

Address:

Duties:

Telephone:

May we contact this employer?

Yes  No

## Volunteer Experience

### Present Volunteer Organization:

Position:

Name:

How long have you volunteered there?

Address:

Duties:

Telephone:

May we contact this organization?

Yes  No

**Previous Volunteer Organization:** Position:

Name: How long did you volunteer there?

Address: Duties:

Telephone:

May we contact this organization?  
 Yes  No

**Related Skills or Experience**

Previous firefighting or emergency response experience?  
 Yes  No Describe:

Previous military or police experience?  
 Yes  No Describe:

Other experiences that may apply to this position?  
 Yes  No Describe:

**Related Skills**  
 Indicate skill level by circling the appropriate number and providing explanation.  
 1 - A trade, licence, recognized certificate or extensive experience.  
 2 - Advanced skills level and/or post-secondary courses or apprenticeships.  
 3 - Familiarity acquired through personal experience, high school courses or related training.

Mechanics	1	2	3	
Pumps, valves or sprinklers	1	2	3	
Electrical systems	1	2	3	
Electronic systems	1	2	3	
Computer technology	1	2	3	

Breathing apparatus or scuba diving	1	2	3	
Building construction or design	1	2	3	
Blueprint reading	1	2	3	
Firefighting tasks	1	2	3	
Rescue procedures	1	2	3	
Athletic sports or skills	1	2	3	
Languages	1	2	3	
Occupational health and safety	1	2	3	
Photography	1	2	3	
Fundraising	1	2	3	
Office equipment	1	2	3	
Typing, filing or telephones	1	2	3	
Public speaking	1	2	3	
Teaching, facilitation or coaching	1	2	3	
Events coordination	1	2	3	
Radio communication	1	2	3	
Medical or health sciences	1	2	3	
Professional driver	1	2	3	
Heavy equipment operation	1	2	3	
Other Licences and Certificates				
CPR				Expiry Date:
First Aid				Expiry Date:

Defibrillation	Expiry Date:
NWT Driver's Licence Class <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> Z <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	Expiry Date:
Description	Date
Description	Date
Description	Date
Education Background	
Elementary School Name:	
Highest grade/level completed	
Secondary School Name:	
Highest grade/level completed	
Post-secondary Education:	
Major or Specialization:	
Level or Degree Achieved	

*Please provide copies of all relevant licences and certificates.*

**Conditions of Acceptance:**

I certify the information provided on this application is true and correct.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Applicant**

**Date**

Personal information will be used for candidate selection purposes only and will be kept strictly confidential.



## **Sample Fire Department Criteria for Eligibility**

1. Must provide a current criminal background check.
2. Must provide a current driver's abstract.
3. Must pass a physical agility test.
4. Must acquire an appropriate Class 3 Licence within six months of completing the probationary period.
5. Must be willing to work in adverse conditions.
6. Must be willing to be on call 24 hours a day.
7. Must be able to work well with others within a structured work environment.
8. Must participate in the departments' training program and enroll in the fire fighter curriculum.
9. Must be willing to be on probation for a period of one year with quarterly performance appraisals.
10. Must attend 40% of the alarms for the assigned station, 80% of assigned duty checks and 80% of scheduled training.



## Sample Interview Questions

1. Outline your education background and any training that you have received and explain how you feel it is relevant to the position that you have applied for.
2. What volunteer experience do you have? Have you been a part of a team, group, organization or do you have work experience that is similar to this position?
3. There are obvious technical skills that are pertinent to this position. Demonstrate your knowledge that you have of them and relate them to the position.
4. Commitment to the organization is extremely important to us. Tell us what you believe is the time commitment required and how you will manage it with your other commitments such as family.
5. We are, on occasion, the viewers and keepers of information that can be traumatic and must remain confidential. What have you done to prepare yourself for this eventuality and how do you believe you would handle such an event?
6. Tell us about how you spend your spare time and any sports or other physical activities you may be involved with.
7. What kinds of personal conflicts / problems might arise in a workplace and what could you do to resolve such problems?
8. Provide us with an example of a time where you faced an emergency situation. Explain the circumstances and what your actions were.
9. You were instructed by a fellow worker to perform a task that was not within their realm of authority. How would you react and if you did not receive the satisfaction you felt was required, what steps would you take to resolve it?
10. How could you help maintain a good relationship with others in the fire hall?
11. What do you believe is the advantage of working in teams and under what type of situation would you step into a leaders spot?
12. The position that you have applied for is obviously something you have thought about. What have you done to prepare yourself for this role?
13. Appreciating the fact that you have not had a significant amount of experience with this organization, in what role do you see yourself attempting to achieve and what steps will you take to realize this success?



## Sample Invitation Letter

{Date}

{Name of Recipient}

{Address}

{Municipality}, Northwest Territories

{Postal Code}

Dear {Name of Recipient};

We are pleased to invite you to volunteer on our department.

We will be hosting an Information Session and Orientation on {date} at {location, at {time}}.

Please find attached the initial training schedule for the next few months. Further training opportunities will be discussed after your initial introduction to our department.

We look forward to seeing you at the Orientation on {date}.

Should you have any questions, or wish to discuss this invitation further, please contact us at the telephone number or {email address}.

Thank you for considering being part of the {Name of Fire Department}.

Sincerely;

Fire Chief

{Name of Fire Department}

cc. Personnel file

{Name of Volunteer}



# ORIENTATION

Your fire department will benefit from having a system to familiarize new volunteers. One of the most successful and safe approaches for developing volunteers and establishing a commitment is to initially offer them specific tasks that allow them to become involved in a limited way. Later, offer opportunities to grow into roles with more responsibilities.

Besides the tasks involved in orientation, consider how to socially integrate the individual into the department. Introduce new volunteers to other department members or identify a contact “go to” person or mentor.

Identifying current members as mentors will serve to recognize the knowledge, skill and leadership qualities of the more experienced department members.

## Schedule an Orientation Session

Conducting an orientation session is an important means of welcoming new volunteers. It is also an opportunity to give clear direction regarding departmental operations and clarify any misunderstandings right up front. It can be helpful in providing an introduction to existing policies, programs and operating procedures.

Joining a new organization and starting a new role can be overwhelming. Most people remember only a portion of the information received. For this reason, there are several principles to consider when developing your orientation.



- Ensure that it is welcoming and informative,
- Involve other members of the department to ensure that new members become acquainted,
- Identify your priorities (corporate needs, operational needs, safety, expectations),
- Limit the information to your priorities,
- Deliver overviews and key messages about a topic, identifying where further information can be found (some topics can be detailed in initial training sessions), and
- Provide written information, so volunteers can refer to it later.

At a minimum, orientations cover:

- Human resources paperwork (e.g. Worker Safety and Compensation Commission Requirements),
- Mission and Values and Code of Conduct of the department,
- Training and practice scheduling and;
- Applicable policies and operating procedures.

Provide an organization chart - a picture that shows the reporting relationship among all of the department positions - and show the volunteer where she/he fits in and who is their supervisor. Provide the volunteer with a written description of his/her duties and the time commitment required.

As part of the human resources paperwork, you can include a Volunteer Service Agreement, or Oath of Commitment. To ensure that expectations are clearly understood, it is critical to formalize expectations and get an agreement from the volunteer regarding their commitment. A Volunteer Service Agreement is an example of such an agreement. It serves to confirm in writing the expectations both of the volunteer and of the fire department, which were identified during recruitment, interviews, orientation and other communications.

## **Additional Resources**

- Sample Orientation Agenda
- Sample Organization Chart for a Fire Department
- Fire Department Code of Conduct: Guidelines
- Vision, Mission, Goals and Values: Guidelines
- Sample Equipment Sign-off Sheet

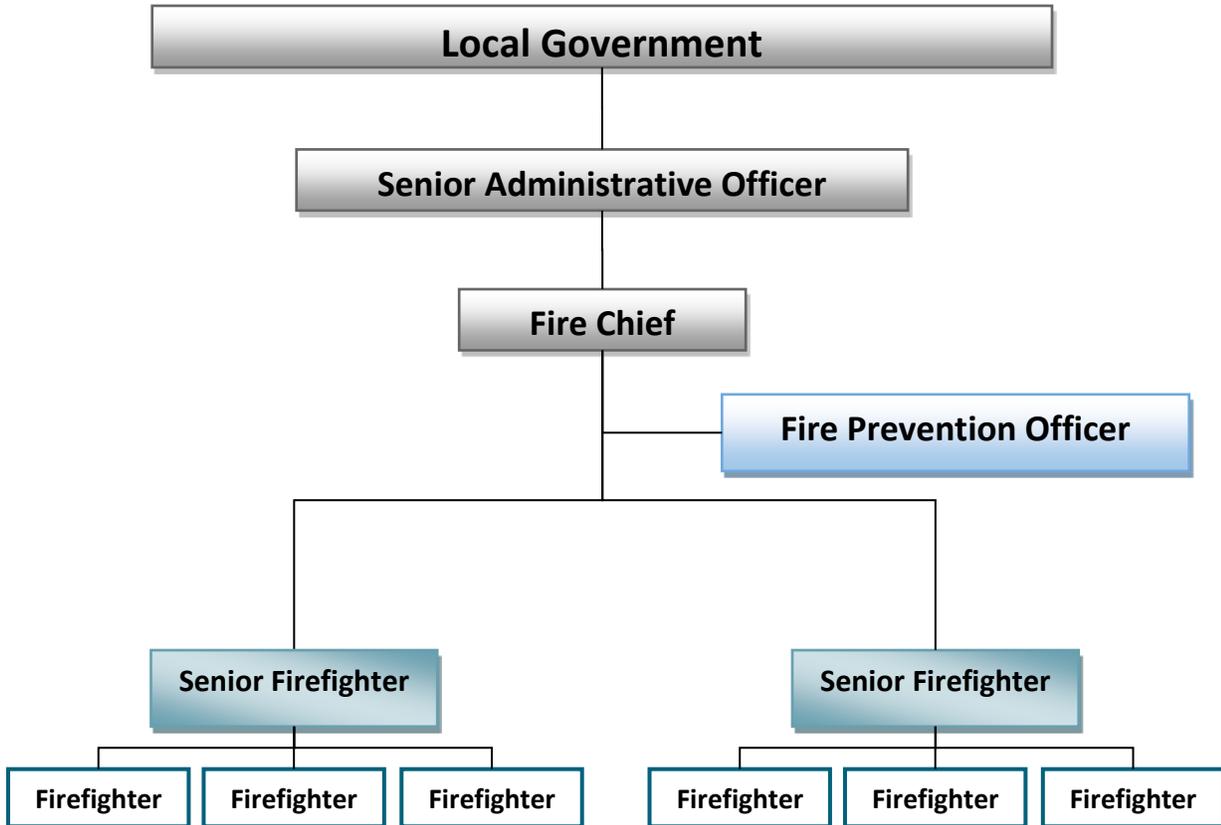
## Sample Orientation Agenda

Approximately Four Hours – Scheduled after work hours or a weekend.

Approximate Time (Minutes)	Topic	Key Points	Presenter	Comments
5	Welcome and Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review housekeeping (washrooms, breaks)</li> <li>• Review agenda</li> <li>• Intro to key speakers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> <li>• Deputy</li> <li>• Training Officer</li> <li>• Other members</li> <li>• Council Rep</li> </ul>	Coffee or refreshments available.
5	Municipal Government Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome speech from the municipality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayor/Chief or Council Member</li> </ul>	Municipal Government Representative should be scheduled well in advance of the orientation date.
15	Human Resources Paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief or Community Human Resources Representative</li> </ul>	See Relevant Human Resources Forms
10	History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date department established</li> <li>• Significant milestones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> </ul>	n/a
10	Organizational Chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the fire department fits into the municipal organization</li> <li>• Rank and reporting structure of the department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> </ul>	See Sample in Handbook
20	Mission, Vision, Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision, Mission</li> <li>• Goals and Objectives</li> <li>• How members' actions contribute to the achievement of goals and objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> </ul>	See Sample in Handbook
15	<b>Break</b>			
15	Core Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical Area of coverage;</li> <li>• Core services;</li> <li>• Station information (human resources and apparatus).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> <li>• Leads for:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suppression;</li> <li>○ Prevention;</li> <li>○ Training Officer;</li> <li>○ Administration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A map of the area of coverage would assist in explaining.
30	Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct;</li> <li>• Relevant policies, procedures, operating guidelines;</li> <li>• Attendance;</li> <li>• Training;</li> <li>• Role in responses;</li> <li>• Equipment provided;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> <li>• Leads for:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suppression</li> <li>○ Prevention</li> <li>○ Training Officer</li> <li>○ Administration</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Refer to established policies or operating guidelines (e.g. Local Assistants Handbook - see MACA).

Approximate Time (Minutes)	Topic	Key Points	Presenter	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor opportunities;</li> <li>• Performance expectations;</li> <li>• Milestones and timeframes;</li> <li>• Progress after probation.</li> </ul>		See Sample Code of Conduct in Handbook.
10	Other Scheduled Events (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Fire department events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief</li> <li>• Deputy</li> <li>• Training officer</li> </ul>	As established by the fire department.
15	<b>Break</b>			
20	Occupational Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Health and Safety Requirements;</li> <li>• Rights and responsibilities;</li> <li>• Potential hazards, controls, equipment and training to prevent or mitigate hazards;</li> <li>• Hazard reporting;</li> <li>• Accident reporting and process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC)</li> <li>• Fire Chief or delegate</li> <li>• Other seasoned Volunteer Fire Fighters</li> </ul>	WSCC staff participation should be scheduled well in advance of the orientation date.
45	Overview of Equipment and Apparatus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute PPE;</li> <li>• Review apparatus and equipment;</li> <li>• Review public education and prevention equipment;</li> <li>• Review administrative supplies and equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Chief</li> <li>• Leads for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suppression;</li> <li>○ Prevention;</li> <li>○ Training Officer;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Equipment should all be serviceable, and well organized and/or displayed.
15	<b>Break</b>			
20	The Good, Bad and the Ugly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefits and challenges of joining – the good, the bad and the ugly</li> <li>• Critical Incident Stress overview</li> <li>• Coping with the demands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department members</li> <li>• Significant other or family member</li> </ul>	Participation on behalf of family members for current volunteers should be organized well in advance.
10	Closing remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions and answers and contact information for future inquiries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief</li> </ul>	<p>A handout with contact information is most helpful.</p> <p>See Volunteer Recruitment brochure.</p>

## Sample Organization Chart for a Fire Department





## Fire Department Code of Conduct: Guidelines

A code of conduct is a list of principles and values to guide Fire Department members. They sometimes describe specific things that firefighters should or should not do. They can also describe the desirable conduct that volunteers should aim towards. As every fire department has different needs, it is not practical to write a code that applies to all departments. This summary is provided to give fire departments a starting point. Each fire department should decide on the actions or statements that are important to them. When developing a Code, consider the following:

- Develop guidelines that are clear and practical
- Focus on the things that are important to the members
- Make sure that the Code is understood by all of the members

A Code of Conduct is a statement that helps firefighters to make the right choices.

### ***Oath***

The Fire Department may want to have new fire fighters swear an oath of service. An oath is a short-form version of the Code and a verbal reminder of duty and expectations. An example is provided below.

“As a Fire Fighter, my fundamental duties are to protect and save lives, and to safeguard property in the service of my community. I will set a good example in all actions and deeds. I will conduct myself at all times, both on and off duty, in a way that will bring honour to the department. I will never use my position for personal gain. I will obey the law, and dedicate myself to the safety of the citizens of and visitors to *[community name]*.”

### ***Values***

More likely, new members will be informed of the important things that describe their service to the Fire Department. A list of possible statements is given below. It is not a

complete list. Your department may want to change the statements or make up new ones. The statements fall into the following categories: *General Principles*, *Professional Conduct*, and *Exercise of Duty*.

***General Principles:***

- Members shall serve the public by performing duties with honesty, courage, and good judgment.
- Members shall be polite and show respect for others, both on or off duty.
- Members shall obey the law at all times.
- Members will treat everyone fairly.
- Members will be truthful and honest at all times.
- Members will provide equal service to all people.
- Members will conduct their personal affairs in a way that does not negatively affect the performance of their duties, or bring discredit to the Fire Department.
- Members will avoid situations that would affect the public perception of the Fire Department.
- Members will accept responsibility for their actions and for the consequences of their actions.
- Members will be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.

***Professional Conduct:***

- Members shall always conduct themselves (on and off duty) in a manner that reflects positively on them, the Fire Department, and the community.
- Members shall not report for duty while under the influence of alcohol, no consume any alcoholic beverage while on duty.
- No member shall consume alcohol or drugs while on duty or in uniform that will impair their ability to perform their duties.
- No member, while in uniform, shall enter any premises where alcoholic beverages are sold or consumed, except in the performance of fire department duties
- No member shall propose or accept personal rewards or gifts that may create a conflict of interest

- Members should not make statements on Fire Department business to the media or other persons at a fire scene or any other place.

***Exercise of Duty:***

- Every member will comply with all general orders and department rules and regulations, as the Fire Chief deems necessary.
- Members shall follow the chain of command. It exists for everyone's safety, and to help make decisions quickly and wisely.
- Members shall not refuse to obey any proper direction of a superior officer.
- Members shall report for duty immediately upon receiving orders to do so.
- In an emergency, every member is expected to perform all duties as required of their assigned role in the department.
- No member will leave their duty without the permission of the officer in charge, either while at the emergency scene or at training.
- Members shall notify the chief if they expect to be absent from duty (including training).
- Members shall be honest and efficient stewards of fire department resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles and equipment.
- Members should keep the fire hall clean and orderly. Their safety depends on it, and its condition reflects upon the department as a whole.



## Vision, Mission, Goals and Values: Guidelines

### ***Vision***

A vision statement is a broad description of the ultimate goal of the fire department. This could be as simple as the vision being a community that is safe from the devastating impact of fire or natural disasters.

### ***Mission***

A mission statement provides a brief description of the fire department's efforts to achieve that vision. It is a broad description of the following:

***What*** the department does. For instance:

- Its purpose;
- Major services it provides:
  - Emergency response (fire suppression, highway rescue, medical response, ground ambulance, other);
  - Public education;
  - Fire prevention activities such as inspections.

***How*** it does it. For instance:

- Quality of service;
- Efficiency of service;
- Proactive vs. Reactive programs;
- Cost effective or economical services.

***For*** whom it does it. For instance:

- The community;
- The public;
- The taxpayers.

## **Goals**

Goals are broad accomplishments to be achieved by your fire department:

- They are broken down into objectives and deliverables;
- Objectives are clear statements of specific activities/tasks that must be performed to achieve the goals;
- Deliverables are tangible, verifiable outcomes that demonstrate that you have met an objective;
- Ensure goals and objectives are smart (specific, measurable achievable, results-focused and time-bound);

When developing goals for the fire department, they should be in line with the vision and mission. Look to the major services identified in your mission. Most likely they include public education, inspections and emergency response. Each of these services should have clearly identified goals. To assist you in identifying those goals, solicit ideas from members of your department that provide those specific services.

For instance, goals for public education might be to implement and maintain public education programs that meet the needs and circumstances of the community. One objective could be to implement and maintain the “alarmed for life program”. Its deliverable may be the number of households surveyed during that year who had operational smoke alarms. Another objective could be to promote the use of the “risk watch” program in the local school. Its deliverable could be the number of classes that have implemented the “risk watch” program into their curriculum during the school year.

## **Ownership**

Once you have identified your vision, mission, goals and objectives, you will need to communicate them clearly, and often to your membership. Post them on your walls, incorporate them onto letterhead or business cards. Recognize individuals who have contributed to achieving goals.

Another way to reinforce your goals and to illustrate how each member contributes to achieving those goals is to have each individual identify tasks that he or she does that contributes to the goals of the department.

This could be the mechanic who maintains the trucks in operating condition, which allows fire fighters to respond to calls in a timely manner. This could be the office clerk who maintains the files, which allows the chief to quickly access information he needs and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the department. This could be the retired schoolteacher who visits the school on a regular basis to provide public education and conduct inspections, thereby making the public more informed about fire safe behaviours and the school safer by ensuring the fire alarms work and the fire drills are conducted.

### **Values**

Values are beliefs that influence the way an individual or group of individuals behave. They are the foundation for your “code of ethics”. Common values in the fire service are: professionalism, the pursuit of excellence, integrity, safety, generosity, contributing to the community, helping others, respect, discipline, teamwork and fellowship. This list is limitless, and is unique to each fire department and its membership.

To help you in identifying values that will shape your code of ethics, survey your department members to determine what their values are. From that list, identify the most common ones that align with your vision, mission and goals.

By identifying the values of your department, you have begun to “talk the talk”. For this to really work, you and your membership need to “walk the walk”.

One way in which you can do this is to discuss these values with your members, ensuring that everyone’s understanding of the values is consistent. For each value, identify behaviours that would demonstrate that value and also behaviours that contradict that value.

For instance, if one of your fire departments values is safety, ask your members to identify ways in which they demonstrate safety (i.e. Using PPE, following operating

guidelines, etc.). You can also identify behaviours that go against the values (i.e. not wearing PPE, driving too fast during response, not following operating guidelines).

Another example of a value is teamwork. Behaviours such as working together; open, honest and respectful communication; following orders at an emergency scene; helping each other with tasks and thanking each other demonstrates teamwork. Behaviours such as freelancing, gossiping and not helping out contradict the value of teamwork.

Once you have established your vision, mission, goals and values with your members, ensure that you reinforce them. Make them part of your performance evaluation. Recognize those individuals who are “walking the walk” and who contribute to achieving the department’s goals.

Remember, needs and circumstances do change. Ensure that you revisit your vision, mission, goals and values to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of your community and the needs of your fire department.





# TRAINING

Initial training is not limited to the front line fire suppression. It should be broader and include preliminary training for all types of volunteer positions. It is important in preparing new volunteers to deliver quality services to the community safely, skilfully and professionally. This training prepares individuals to perform duties as outlined in their respective role descriptions. Training should include human skills and role specific technical skills.



## Human skills

Behaviour is an expression of an individual's values and beliefs. Such is the same for your fire department's values and beliefs. Your training program should create an environment that educates and encourages volunteers to act in the manner that allows them to succeed.

Simply stated you want to develop motivated, responsible, accountable individuals who are committed to goals, work and learning. You want them to demonstrate this by the manner in which they communicate, resolve conflict, and manage stress and work within the team.

The fire department's Code of Conduct and other guidelines that identify expected behaviour and interactions would be emphasized in this component. These topics would be addressed to the general population of recruits, regardless of their designated positions.

## **Role Specific Technical Skills**

While each position within your department has training requirements that are distinctive to the tasks involved, answering these general questions will assist you in developing specific training. The best sources of information for this are role descriptions and a training program that is recognized as an industry standard.

### *Relevancy*

- What are the major duties of this position?
- What knowledge and skills are required to competently complete those tasks?
- How will these be measured?

### *Safety*

- What hazards (physical, environmental, psychological) might the individual be exposed to?
- What training will prevent or mitigate the impact of those hazards?
- What are the safety requirements for the Territory?

Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) School of Community Government offers a variety of training courses designed for community volunteer fire fighters. You are encouraged to review MACA's available courses to assist in developing training objectives.

## **Probation**

Probationary periods are established so new volunteers receive ongoing supervision and coaching to ensure that they are safe and that the operations are running efficiently. They may range in duration anywhere from several months to a year and they depend largely on the roles each volunteer will play.

Tasks assigned should be consistent with the knowledge and skills displayed by the individuals. As they continue to gain knowledge, skills and experience, begin to introduce them to more challenging tasks and responsibilities.

Assign a senior member to help each new member. They can help new members become familiar with the fire department and support them during training events and other duties and make them feel part of the team.

A probationary period gives you an excellent opportunity to assess that the volunteer is suited to the position and the fire department.

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## **Recognition as a Regular Member of the Fire Department**

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Completing the initial training and probationary period involves a great deal of time, physical and emotional commitment. As such, individuals should be recognized formally for their efforts.

Some type of recognition such as certificates or graduation ceremonies will go a long way in motivating individuals to continue their efforts. It will also signify another level of integration and acceptance in your department.

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## **Additional Resources**

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- Sample Meeting Agenda
- Sample Fire Department Meeting Minutes
- Sample Training Night Agenda



# Sample Meeting Agenda

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendance:

## ***Current Business***

Summary of responses:

Summary of training:

Future training:

Apparatus review (status and plans):

Equipment review (status and plans):

Summary of prevention and inspections:

Plans for prevention and inspections:

Summary of public education activities:

Plans for public education activities:

Administrative topics:

Occupational Health and Safety:

## ***New Business***

Review of suggestions, ideas for continuous improvement:

Review tasks, assignments and responsibilities:

Next meeting date:



## Sample Fire Department Meeting Minutes

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendees:

Regrets:

Item	Discussion	Decision, Action, Responsibility
Team Check In		
Current Business	Responses	
	Training	
	Apparatus	
	Equipment	
	Inspections	
	Public Education	
	Administration	
	Occupational Health and Safety	
New Business	Review suggestions, ideas for continuous improvement	
Review Tasks	Assignments and Responsibilities	
Confirm Next Meeting	Next Meeting Date	



# Sample Training Night Agenda

## ***Brief Administrative Update (15 minutes)***

(Keep it brief, it's for information, not discussion, provide or post a summary of key points)

- Responses;
- Prevention;
- Public education;
- Upcoming events;
- Changes to Policy, Procedures, Operational Guidelines;
- Occupational Health and Safety;
- Training;
- Administration;
- Other announcements.

## ***Review of Previous Training***

- Summarize key concepts

## ***Current Training Topic***

- Icebreaker;
- Review of material;
- Theory (if applicable);
- Skills acquisition;
- Practical application of knowledge or skills.

## ***Future Training (15 minutes)***

- Provide handouts, pre-course material for next training session;
- Confirm next training date.



# RETENTION

Recruiting and training new volunteers is just the beginning. The long-term challenge will be to create an environment in which individuals want to stay because they continue to be motivated, interested, challenged and supported as valued members of the team.

## Community Support

Encourage your local government to decide on the appropriate level of service for the community. This will help you to make decisions about the required number of volunteers, their roles and their skills. Keep local government members well informed about the Fire Department so they can clearly understand and support the Fire Department's needs.



## Leadership

The tools and templates in this resource provide you with some basic leadership practices that support retention efforts. They are not intended to replace the need to develop leadership practices and operating guidelines on a broader scale.

By being a proactive, involved and present leader you can motivate your volunteers. Recognize their efforts and show you are grateful. Give them responsibility and provide them with the tools to do the tasks. This way they can be qualified to do everything, to the best of their ability.

## **Mission and Values**

When developing your fire department's mission, goals and objectives, involve your membership. Communicate these often in writing and in speech. By being involved and informed, they are more able to assist you in achieving goals and fulfilling the mission.

Demonstrate your belief and commitment to the values through your words and actions. Identify your expectations, set high standards and communicate them clearly so that the volunteers can do the same.

## **Fostering Diversity and a Respectful Environment**

As noted previously, in order to enhance your department by utilizing the skills and talents of a diverse population, you may have brought in individuals from different backgrounds, genders, age and abilities.

Regardless of whether the diversity is a result of gender, age, ethnicity or disability, it would benefit your department and the volunteer to consider accommodations that are necessary and suitable. These may include making physical facilities accessible, modifying work areas, restructuring tasks and providing assistance as required.

To involve your membership and support a diverse workplace consider the following:

- Raise awareness of department members (disability awareness, cultural sensitivity, other interpersonal topics).
- Train for specific needs (educate members on the use of assistive devices, resolving communication, cultural, age, or gender differences).
- Consider policy and budget implications.

## **Critical Incident Support**

Make sure that critical incident support is available to members and their families if they need it and ensure that senior Fire Department members are trained to recognize when members may need critical incident support services.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Where there is difference, therein may lay conflict. This conflict may come in many forms, from a simple difference of opinion to a disagreement or a more complicated interpersonal conflict.

In some cases this interpersonal conflict could escalate to harassment. In any case, having clear guidelines and expectations will assist both the leaders and the members involved to resolve the conflict in a fair, respectful and timely manner.

## **Harassment**

Leaders in the fire department are responsible to react appropriately to harassment complaints. They also have an obligation to prevent harassment from occurring in the first place. This can be done by ensuring volunteers are aware of what harassment is and is not. Ensure that you have a complaint procedure in place to allow volunteers to feel comfortable about bringing forward any concerns.

## **Performance Management and Supervision**

Provide volunteers with the opportunity to learn, grow and lead through relevant training, progressive responsibilities and challenges. Motivate them, coach them and continue to challenge them.

A fair, firm and flexible approach to informal and formal performance evaluation provides volunteers with meaningful information about the work they do. View it as an opportunity for the volunteers to know where they stand relative to the goals and objectives of their roles, and of the department. In doing so, you can challenge your volunteers to continually improve performance and personal effectiveness.

## **Empowerment, Involvement and Delegation**

Share and distribute the workload. If you have conducted a needs assessment for your department during pre-recruitment planning, you have already begun to identify tasks and roles that need to be filled in order to further enhance the efforts of the department. Look within your department to determine if any willing individuals have the skills and knowledge required to complete the tasks. If not, look externally and recruit for that purpose.

Once you have identified the tasks and the individuals assigned, and then delegate the work, ensuring that you are communicating relevant expectations, timelines, authority and accountability.

In this way, you can distribute the work so that each member is contributing in a meaningful way to the goals of the department, and that each member is accountable for his or her part in achieving those results.

## Communication and Problem Solving

Open communication practices and ample opportunity to provide ideas and air concerns will promote a sense of belonging, involvement and ownership. Be prepared to act on any problems that arise. Otherwise, you run the risk of losing credibility. Although there may be reasons why you may be unable to implement the ideas, you can assure the individual that you give it serious consideration.

There are several processes that you can employ to bring complaints and issues to light, which will allow you to respond to them in a proactive and timely manner. Examples of these types of practices include:

- Complaints process,
- Continuous improvement forms,
- Satisfaction surveys,
- Agenda items in meetings and;
- Problem solving and decision-making processes.



## Recognition, Rewards and Incentives

Rewards and recognition help both the volunteers and the leaders get what they need. Recognition, rewards and incentives range from a simple thank you to certificates of appreciation, compensation for work and official recognition such as exemplary service medals and long service investitures.

The following principles will assist you in determining the nature of the recognition that best fits the needs of your department. Establish criteria for the performance or contribution that constitutes recognizable behaviour. Identify what behaviours or actions are being rewarded and recognized. Ensure that all volunteers are eligible and that anyone that performs at the level or standards stated in the criteria receives the reward.

Identify types of behaviour that you would like to reward. For example:

- Duration of service;
- Attendance for training, prevention, public education activities, incident response, administration;
- Achieving milestones;
- Exemplary service;
- Team work and; and
- A job well done or above and beyond the call of duty, or other behaviours.

Determine what's involved:

- Cost: You want to have enough time, support and finances to sustain the reward on an ongoing basis;
- Timing: In some cases, recognition should occur as close to the performance as possible in order to reinforce the behaviour you want to encourage. In others, you may want to wait for an annual event; and
- Longevity: Do you make it an annual event or presentation, or will it be a one-time event.

The following provide examples of recognition efforts. Use these examples to enhance your efforts, or as a starting point for your own ideas.

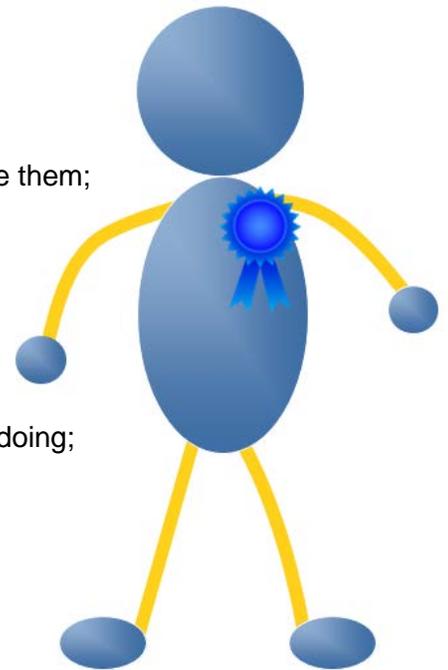
Foster a sense of fellowship, family and belonging in the following ways:

- Use a preferred name (i.e. first name, last name or nick name);
- Send cards to celebrate personal milestones (birthdays, anniversaries, new arrivals);
- Send cards to celebrate personal or professional achievement (graduation, promotions);
- Send get well or sympathy cards;
- Lend a helping hand when they need it outside of the fire service (barn raising, construction, roofs, decks, moving);
- Provide opportunities to get together, network and celebrate fellowship through events such as banquets, lunches, awards nights and sporting events;
- Make the time to have lunch or coffee with a volunteer;
- Take an interest in their personal lives;
- If volunteers have been absent, let them know that they were missed;
- Keep them informed;

- Provide caps, shirts and jackets to promote belonging and camaraderie;
- Take pictures at scenes, during training, of fun times. Put them in to a slide show for banquets and special events, or put them on wall or in an album;
- Have reserved seating for them at special events;
- Ensure that you and they are having fun. Have competitions; encourage them to develop their skills through competitive teams (vehicle extrication, fire fit combat challenge, relays, and mutual aid events, provincial, national and international events); and
- Organize social events for members and their families which help to make a family-friendly Fire Department.

To foster and promote personal and professional growth, you can:

- Cultivate special interests or strengths and find opportunities to use them;
- Offer training opportunities and resources;
- Offer leadership opportunities;
- Provide constructive and positive feedback on performance;
- Provide notes of encouragement;
- Show that you are watching and paying attention to what they are doing;
- Debrief with them after an event;
- Provide them with a mentor;
- Ask them to represent the fire department at a public event; and
- Continue to offer expanded, higher levels of responsibility.



To show that you recognize and celebrate their accomplishments, you can:

- Say thank you sincerely and often, either verbally, in writing or by your actions;
- Say thank you for not only those big jobs, but also for small tasks;
- Share their success with others; and
- Create the “Wall of Fame”. Have a wall lined with portraits of volunteers, dressed in uniform. Below each volunteer, note years of service, title, accomplishments and copies of certificates.

Provide them with opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways by:

- Asking for their input;
- Assigning them to act as leaders in orientation or education activities;

- Assign them mentor roles;
- Assigning them to research and recommend new apparatus, equipment, techniques or operating guidelines; and
- Making a gift to a charitable cause in their name.

Recognize Tenure and Service by nominating them for:

- NWT Fire Service Merit Awards;
- Outstanding Achievement Awards for Volunteerism in the NWT;
- Fire department awards (use a nomination form and apply criteria consistently);
- Federal Fire Service Exemplary Service Medals and Bars; and
- Municipal awards.

Let Everyone Know:

- Post news articles in newsletters or on websites. Profile volunteers and highlight their contributions and achievements;
- Post a “Volunteer of the Month”;
- Create an Honour Roll;
- Provide letters of reference;
- Provide their employers with letters describing how they’ve contributed;
- Ask an elected official to support the fire department in his (or her) public statements; and
- Give public recognition for the businesses that support the Fire Department, including the employers of volunteers.

## **Extrinsic Rewards**

These rewards are tangible ways to recognize volunteers for their efforts. Some may come at a cost, so you may have to budget for them, solicit council support, and collaborate with local businesses to sponsor these through donations or partnerships.

- Reduced rates on food, beverages, admission or membership from local businesses;
- Gift certificates;
- Attendance draws;
- T shirts, ball caps, pins, pens, calendars, bumper stickers, licence plates, business cards; and

- Sending them to workshops or conferences.

These types of incentives and rewards do have a cost involved. If you are interested in pursuing them, you will have to consider including them in your budget, seeking support and endorsement from Council, or collaborate with businesses to make them a reality.

- Expenses for costs accrued through fire department business (mileage, equipment);
- Travel expenses;
- Training and conference registration;
- Childcare provided, or cost reimbursed; and
- Tell members about the federal income tax rebate, and provide a letter of support if needed.

## **Honorarium or Pay**

It is the practice of some departments to provide an honorarium or pay for volunteer activities. The determination of pay or honorarium varies from department to department and could be based on a points system (so many points per call or event) or an hourly rate.

If you wish to pursue this type of recognition program, it is imperative that you seek input and involvement from the volunteer complement. Consider the economic means of your municipality, your budget, criteria for payment, taxation implications, how pay will be calculated and how records will be maintained. It is suggested that you consult with neighbouring departments, or departments of the same economic, response and capability profiles as your own. Once you have the necessary information, develop a business case and present it to Council. To assist you in establishing a business case, the following link provides you with a formula to determine the economic value of your volunteers. (<http://sectorsource.ca/resource/file/assigning-economic-value-volunteer-activity-eight-tools-efficient-program-management>)

## **Recognizing and Appreciating the Family and Significant Others**

How do you thank the person who is awoken at 2 a.m. to a pager tone, who watches his or her loved one rush out the door into potential danger, who sits all night waiting for the return, only to spend the remainder of the early hours listening to a recap of the emergency as the volunteer fire fighter tries to wind down?

How do you thank the youngster who had to wait patiently for a parent to return from a fire call, in order to finish building the new bike?

How do you thank the individual who was left behind to oversee a mob of six year olds at a birthday party, by a partner who was paged out to a car accident?

How do you thank the family who has listened to the same message for the tenth time in one week as the individual rehearses for a public education event?

How do you thank the family who's regular weekend outing seems to be yet another fire department fundraising event?

The answer is simple. Thank them often, thank them with enthusiasm and thank them personally. Consider what families and friends of volunteers have actually contributed and offered to the fire service. Through their sacrifice, understanding and flexibility, they have enabled the volunteer to be available and capable of doing the work.

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## **Additional Resources**

- Guidelines for Delegating and Empowering Your Team
- Examples of Public Recognition
- Sample 'Thank You' Letter from the Fire Chief
- Sample 'Thank You' Letter Mayor and Council
- Sample Certificate of Appreciation
- MACA Fire Service Merit Awards Program
- Canada Revenue Agency – Federal Income Tax Rebate
- Outstanding Volunteer Awards
- MACA Volunteer Recognition Policy



# Guidelines for Delegating and Empowering Your Team

## ***Identify the task***

- Determine what tasks can be delegated
- Determine the goal or objective of the task
- Define if it is because of time or out of area of expertise

## ***Identify the individual best suited to complete this task***

- Identify qualities required
- Identify skills required
- Identify knowledge required

## ***Describe the task to the individual***

- Expectations
- Specific duties
- Timelines
- Communication requirements

## ***Emphasize responsibility and accountability***

- This is empowerment
- With this delegation comes authority and responsibility
- It is an opportunity to demonstrate your trust and confidence in the individual

## ***Provide the tools and resources necessary to complete the task***

- This may include time, human resources, finances (have a budget)

## ***Communicate the authority and responsibility to department members***

- It is imperative that the rest of the department is aware of the task assigned and the authority or responsibility that comes with it. This prevents miscommunication or inadvertent sabotage to the project.

## ***Review the work, provide positive and constructive feedback***

- Is it meeting or exceeding your expectations?
- Even if it is not quite what you envisioned, does it still meet the need?
- Provide guidance, be a sounding board.
- When reviewing the work, it is important not to over direct. If this is the case, then you need to consider if this task should have been delegated.

## ***Once completed, thank the individual***

- Remember to recognize the individual's efforts.



## Examples of Public Recognition

There are many ways to recognize or thank the persons, organizations and families that support the Fire Department and its volunteers. Some of the possible ways are listed below:

- Write a 'Thank You' letter to the person or organization on behalf of the Fire Department or the local government. A sample letters are included in this file.
- Make an announcement in the local paper or on the community radio when a new volunteer has joined the Fire Department.
- Make an announcement in the local paper or on the community radio when members have achieved various certifications or milestone years of service (5 years; 10 years; 15 years, etc.)
- Present a Certificate of Appreciation that can be displayed at the person's place of business. An example is included in the file.
- Publicly recognize employers who release their staff for training or firefighting with an annual announcement in the local paper or on the community radio.
- Arrange for an annual letter of thanks to each firefighter from the Mayor and Council. An example is included in the file.
- Make an announcement or presentation at a community feast or other public event.
- Encourage your community to apply to MACA for Volunteer Recognition Funding to support any event that recognizes volunteers (which can include fire fighters). More information is available at [http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/?page\\_id=4489](http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/?page_id=4489)



## Sample 'Thank You' Letter from the Fire chief

*Name of Person*

Fire Chief,

*Name of Community*

*Address of Community Government*

*Date*

*Name of Person or Representative of Organization*

*Address of Person or Organization*

Dear: *Name of Person*

The [*Name of Community*] Fire Department has the important responsibility to respond to fires and other emergencies that occur within our community.

As you probably know, the Fire Department is made of volunteers who generously provide their time and skills to maintain this important service for the community.

In addition to the volunteer firefighters, there are many other persons and organizations that also assist the Fire Department. For example, the volunteers are supported by their families or their employers who provide them with time off from work for Fire Department duties.

I wish to acknowledge the contributions that *you/your organization* has made to the Fire Department. Your commitment to our Fire Department is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

*Name*

Fire Chief



## Sample 'Thank You' Letter from Mayor and Council

*Name of Person*

Mayor,

*Name of Community*

*Address of Community Government*

*Date*

*Name of Person or Representative of Organization*

*Address of Person or Organization*

Dear: *Name of Person*

The [*Name of Community*] Fire Department has the important responsibility to respond to fires and other emergencies that occur within our community.

As you probably know, the Fire Department is made of volunteers who generously provide their time and skills to maintain this important service for our community.

In addition to the volunteer firefighters, there are many other persons and organizations that also assist the Fire Department. For example, the volunteers are supported by their families and/or their employers who provide them with time off from work for Fire Department duties.

On behalf of the Community Council, I wish to acknowledge the contributions that *you/your organization* has made to the Fire Department. Your commitment to our Fire Department is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

*Name*

Mayor



# Certificate of Appreciation

This certificate is awarded to

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in recognition of valuable contributions to

Fire Department

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Signature

Date

Signature

Date



# **Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) Fire Service Merit Awards Program**

*The following information was taken from the MACA website. Please check the website (see below) to be sure that the information is current or contact the Office of the Fire Marshal.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs acknowledges and recognizes the important contributions made by firefighters and community fire departments through the Fire Service Merit Awards Program (“the Program”).

The Program includes length of service awards, fire service merit awards and an Honours award, all which may be awarded annually.

## ***LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARDS***

### **1. General**

The Department recognizes volunteer and paid firefighters who have served for lengths of two, five, ten, 15 and 20 years. Recognition takes the form of individual certificates and length of service pins for each period.

Firefighters recognized for 10, 15 and 20 years of service receive a bronze (ten years), silver (15 years) or gold (20 years) medal recognizing their commitment to fire protection in the NWT.

Firefighters being recognized for 25 and 30 years of service receive a commemorative clasp along with service bars to be added to the 20 year medal ribbon.

### **2. Eligibility**

All volunteer and paid firefighters are eligible to receive length of service awards corresponding to the number of years served in the Northwest Territories.

### **3. Application**

As the Department does not keep records on community firefighters, it will issue a call annually to fire departments and community governments for applications for each level of award as firefighters become eligible. Length of service will be verified by the community Senior Administrative Officer or Fire Chief on each application.

Application forms are available from MACA regional offices and on the MACA website ([http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/MACA\\_Public-Safety\\_Fire-Service-Merit-Award\\_2007.pdf](http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/MACA_Public-Safety_Fire-Service-Merit-Award_2007.pdf)).

### **4. Presentation**

The Office of the Fire Marshal issues length of service awards as applications are received and verified. Awards may be sent directly to recipients or may be presented at an organized event by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs or his/her designate.

## ***FIRE SERVICE MERIT AWARDS***

### **1. General**

Fire Service Merit Awards are presented to individual firefighters and/or community fire departments that have made significant contributions to the Northwest Territories' fire service and community fire protection.

An Honours designation may also be awarded annually in recognition of an individual and/or community fire departments' contribution to the fire service on a territorial basis.

### **2. Eligibility**

All community fire departments, volunteer and paid firefighters in the Northwest Territories are eligible to receive a Fire Service Merit Award or an Honours Fire Service Merit Award.

### **3. Nominations**

Any member of the public may nominate individual firefighters and/or community fire departments for a Fire Service Merit Award however individual firefighters cannot nominate themselves.

Nomination forms are distributed through MACA regional offices and community government offices.

The deadline for nominations each year is established and announced by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

### **4. Selection Criteria**

Nominees are considered for Awards based on their contribution to the Northwest Territories' fire service and/or community fire protection. This contribution may include but is not limited to an outstanding achievement in fire protection, an innovative idea/solution to a fire related issue, a high degree of personal commitment or a demonstrated improvement over the past year (including training achievements). The impact of achievements on the community and/or the territory may also be considered.

### **5. Selection Committee**

A selection committee may choose award recipients, including Honour Award recipients, from among all nominations received by the public. The selection committee consists of the Fire Marshal, the Assistant Fire Marshals and one representative each from the NWT Fire Chiefs' Association and the Local Government Administrators of the Northwest Territories.

### **6. Presentation**

Fire Service Merit Awards, including Honour Awards, may be presented to recipients at a public awards ceremony to be held each year to coincide with Fire Prevention Week (the week containing October 9th of each year). Awards are presented by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs or his/her delegate. The ceremony may be held in the Great Hall of the Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife or may be rotated to other communities at the discretion of the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.



# NWT Fire Service Merit Awards Nomination Form

Nominee Name (Individual Firefighter and/or Community Fire Department):

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Nominee Contact Information (phone, address):

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Nominator Name:

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Nominator's Contact Information (phone, address):

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Are you willing to be recognized as the Nominator:      Yes       No

Using the space below, please identify the fire protection related achievement this individual firefighter or community fire department has performed and give your reason(s) for your nomination. These achievements can include but are not limited to:

- An innovative idea/solution to a fire related issue;
- A high degree of personal dedication and/or commitment;
- A demonstrated improvement over the past year (including training achievements);
- What impact the achievement had on the community in terms of fire protection; and contribution(s) to the territorial fire service.

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## NOMINATION GUIDELINES:

1. All nominations must be received by the nomination deadline. Nominations received after the deadline will be considered ineligible for the NWT Fire Service Merit

Awards.

2. Nominations must be for paid or volunteer firefighters and community fire departments in the Northwest Territories.
3. Firefighters, supervisors, co-workers and the public may make nominations; firefighters are not permitted to nominate themselves.
4. All nominations must follow the format outlined above and include specific information about the nominee's achievement.

**For more information, contact:**

Office of the Fire Marshal  
Department of Municipal and Community Affairs  
P.O. Box 1320  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9  
Phone: 867-873-7469  
Fax: 867-873-0260  
Email: [stephen\\_moss@gov.nt.ca](mailto:stephen_moss@gov.nt.ca)

Additional nomination forms and Program Guidelines are available on the MACA website:  
[http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/?page\\_id=618](http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/?page_id=618)

# Canada Revenue Agency – Federal Income Tax Rebate

## Line 362 of the Income Tax Form – Volunteer firefighters' amount

*The following information has been taken from the Canada Revenue Agency website. Please check the website (see below) to be sure that the information is current.*

You can claim an amount of \$3,000 if you meet the following conditions:

- you were a volunteer firefighter during the year; **and**
- you completed at least 200 hours of eligible volunteer firefighting services with one or more fire departments in the year.

However, if you provided services to the same fire department, other than as a volunteer, for the same or similar duties, you cannot include any hours related to that department in determining if you have met the 200-hour threshold.

### **Note**

As a volunteer firefighter, you may be eligible for an income exemption of up to \$1,000 if you received a payment from a government, municipality, or other public authority for carrying out volunteer firefighter duties. If you choose to claim this income exemption, you will **not** be eligible for the volunteer firefighters' amount.

### **Eligible services**

Eligible volunteer firefighter services include primary and secondary services you provided to a fire department.

Primary services include:

- responding to and being on-call for firefighting and related emergency calls as a firefighter;
- attending meetings held by the fire department; and
- participating in required training related to the prevention or suppression of fire.

Secondary services you provided as a volunteer firefighter to a fire department are also eligible, such as the maintenance of vehicles and equipment used by the fire department and the delivery of educational sessions undertaken by the fire department.

### **Calculating eligible hours**

You must complete a minimum of 200 hours of eligible volunteer firefighter services with one or more fire departments in the year.

For the purpose of counting the number of eligible hours, the number of hours devoted to primary services **must** exceed the number of hours devoted to secondary services for a particular fire department.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng/ddctns/lns360-390/362-eng.html>  
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/tpcs/ncm-tx/rtrn/cmpltng/rprtng-ncm/lns101-170/101/vlntr-eng.html>



# Outstanding Volunteer Awards

Every January, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs calls for nominations for the NWT Outstanding Volunteer Awards Program in order to recognize the voluntary achievements and contributions made by volunteers in Northwest Territories communities.

## ***Who is a volunteer?***

You probably already know a volunteer, a friend or neighbor, who is always there ready to help someone. For example, someone who:

- raises money for school activities;
- helps in the school;
- provides food for the needy;
- preserves and teaches their culture;
- helps those who are less able to take care of themselves; or
- cuts wood, shovels walkways, helps with reading.

## ***How do we say Thank You?***

Volunteers improve our quality of life and strive to make our communities better places to live. We want to thank them for their work. The Outstanding Volunteer Awards is a great way to say thank you to the selfless individuals who give their time to our communities.

Territorial winners receive \$500.00 to give to a volunteer organization of their choice as well as a certificate recognizing them for their efforts in building our communities through volunteering.

## ***How does the Awards Program work?***

Anybody can nominate an individual or a group whose voluntary work strengthens and enriches northern life.

There are four categories:

- Youth
- Individual
- Elder
- Group

You can nominate someone online or download a nomination form.

## **How to Nominate**

The nomination form requires details about the volunteer's type of achievement, type of involvement and level of impact on the community.

**Type of achievement:** Describe the significant contributions or participation made by the volunteer or group designed to improve the quality of life.

**Type of involvement:** Describe the volunteer's participation, or if nominating a group, the work performed by the group

**Level of impact on the community:** Describe the ways the community has benefited from the volunteer or group's work.

Please include any other information you believe is relevant.

The nomination form can filled out online, or printed and mailed, or faxed back to your MACA Regional office or to the Sport, Recreation, and Youth Division office in Yellowknife.

### ***Judging Criteria***

**The evaluation guideline includes, but is not limited to:**

- The duration (minimum of 100 hours) and impact of the volunteerism;
- The number of years, months, and approximate number of volunteer hours the nominee committed to the activity;
- The uniqueness and inclusiveness (involving others) of the nominee's contributions and commitments;
- Their leadership role in the community or organization; and
- The challenges and/or barriers the nominee had to overcome in order to achieve their goal.

# **Municipal and Community Affairs Volunteer Recognition Policy**

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) may provide financial assistance to community governments to support the recognition of volunteers.

MACA is guided by the following principles when implementing this policy:

- a. Volunteers play an important role in contributing to sustainable, safe and vibrant communities and should be recognized and encouraged to continue these efforts.
- b. Community governments should be encouraged and supported to promote community volunteerism through planned community recognition events.

The policy applies to community governments in the Northwest Territories.

## ***Eligibility and Criteria***

### **(1) Application Process**

- a. A call for applications will be issued every spring. Each community government may apply for a maximum of \$1000 per application cycle to support the recognition of volunteers. A second call for applications may be issued should there be available funding after the first round of applications is approved.
- b. Applications for funding must include budget estimates that detail all sources of revenue and all expected expenses. Applications must also include an event design description, event objectives, and the date of the planned event.
- c. Applications must be submitted in accordance with the application form and guidelines provided by the Department.
- d. Applications for events which have already taken place will not be considered.
- e. Only those planned community events which serve to recognize and/or promote community volunteers and/or volunteer organizations are eligible for funding under this policy.

Eligible expenses include:

- i. Materials and supplies (gifts/plaques, etc.) having a total value of less than three hundred dollars (\$300.00)
- ii. Rental of venues
- iii. Food/catering
- iv. Other expenses may be submitted for approval to the department prior to being incurred

Ineligible expenses include:

- I. Core operational funding;
- II. Per diems, fees, wages or similar payments to participants;
- III. Expenses related to the conduct of fundraising events

- IV. Cash gifts; or
- V. Prizes valued at three hundred dollars (\$300.00) or greater.

Reimbursement and Reporting Considerations:

Funding under this policy will be provided upon receipt of the following documents within 30 days after the event:

- I. A summary report detailing how the funding was used, in the template provided by the Department (see [www.maca.gov.nt.ca](http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca)); and
- II. A financial report showing all revenues and expenses related to the event, accompanied by receipts.

***Review and appeal***

- I. Applications will be reviewed on the basis of the completed application form and according to the precepts of this policy by the Sport, Recreation and Youth division of the Department.
- II. In the event an applicant wishes to appeal the review or decision of their application, an appeal may be made in writing to the Deputy Minister.

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## Give Us Your Feedback

The Office of the Fire Marshal is committed to continually improving its resources to support members of the Northwest Territories.

We want to know what you think of this resource, what you like best, and what you think needs to be changed or improved so that we can make the necessary adjustments.

We welcome your comments by mail, telephone or e-mail.

Reference: Volunteer Fire Fighter Recruitment and Retention – Guidelines and Tools

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