

Larkspur Fire Protection District Volunteer Firefighter Program

INTRODUCTION

The Larkspur Fire Protection District (LFPD) started as a Volunteer Fire organization in the late 1960's with donated equipment and civic-minded citizens. The LFPD has today evolved into the modern combination organization that exists to protect 108 square miles of Douglas County. Even today, the LFPD relies heavily on volunteer personnel to provide additional staffing for outlying stations, to supplement on-duty shifts, and to provide surge staffing for calls for assistance during critical incidents and other events. Our ability to utilize trained volunteers provides the District and our constituents with a substantial economic benefit. In turn, our volunteers receive valuable training while providing a public service.

As the Department migrated from a non-profit corporation to a governmental entity with the power to impose taxes, volunteer members began pulling shifts whenever possible. A Reserve Firefighter program was added for individuals who did not reside within the Larkspur Fire Protection District but who were desirous of volunteering their time as firefighters. Through a combination of the volunteer and reserve programs, the District was able to provide adequate staffing for emergencies and standby's at the station. Many firefighters that started as volunteers were able to acquire certifications over time and gain valuable experience that assisted them in securing a career position either in our department or another.

With the changes in career staffing, increasing volunteer membership, and the need to staff other stations in the District, the time has come to adjust our Volunteer program. This need is in large part required by the success and vibrancy of our current volunteer program. In contrast to national trends, the LFPD has been tremendously successful in recruiting, training, and retaining volunteer members. Our revised volunteer program will reflect the same reliance and place the same importance on the continuing contributions and unselfish participation of volunteer Firefighters. But, in light of our evolving needs and the requirements of our District, we will be breaking the volunteer workforce into two separate and distinct divisions. The two new divisions will be named Operations and Logistics.

OPERATIONS DIVISION

The Operations Division will be assigned traditional volunteer members who are qualified to perform emergency tasks based upon their knowledge, skills, and certifications. These volunteers will serve as Firefighters or EMT's meeting all of the certification requirements for an Operations Division position as outline in LFPD S.O.G.# 121.

Among the duties performed by members of this Division will be: emergency responses such as fire suppression, structural and wildland, as well as responding to emergency medical incidents. Volunteer members in this division will be assigned to a shift and will be expected to complete 24 hours of shift time per month with their assigned shift. Members will rotate every 6 months to another shift, allowing ample time for each member to become acquainted with their assigned shift. These rotations will permit members to increase their professional knowledge and experience differing operational methodologies.

Members may perform extra tours with another shift but must complete 24 hours with their assigned duty shift. Overall, our hope is to make it easier for volunteers to spend time at the station, ensure more line personnel are available to staff equipment as well as outlying stations, and provide training and networking opportunities for all members. All requirements for S.O.G# 121 must be met for a member to remain in the Operations Division.

Our goal is to staff our volunteer stations as soon as the current remodeling efforts are completed. At present, Station 161 and Station 162 are expected to be completed by mid to late 2009 barring no unforeseen circumstances or changes in our requirements. We are also currently completing a schematic design for a substation possibly in the Greenland Road area. Shift assignments will be made by the command staff on an impartial basis. In all, each member will work with all three shifts during an 18 month period.

LOGISTICS DIVISION

The Logistics Division will also be composed of volunteer members who do not possess current certifications or who by personal preference choose not to serve in operational activities. Members of the Logistics Division will perform tasks, conduct activities, and undertake projects that have been traditionally performed by line personnel.

Members serving in the Logistics Division could, e.g., provide victim assistance to injured parties and family members, staff shelters during winter storms or other evacuation situations, assisting with notifying and evacuating residents during a fire or flood, training community personnel on life-safety matters or other subjects, supporting line personnel by providing rehabilitation services at major incidents, participating in and organizing the Larkspur Fire Protection District's Community Emergency Response

Team (C.E.R.T), and providing personnel for clerical duties during a major event to include filling positions at a Command Post until relieved by a qualified individual or Incident Management Team. Logistics Division personnel would not be eligible to operate operational apparatus under emergency conditions.

Members of the Logistics Division will be expected to obtain 36 hours of training per year and attend at least 4 division meetings per year, in addition to making themselves available for callout when possible. Logistics Division personnel will not be required to meet the same requirements as a volunteer member serving in the Operations Division. Lastly, volunteers serving in the logistics division will continue their eligibility for retirement benefits.

OFFICERS

With the addition of a new division and the increasing volunteer membership, we will need to increase the number of officers to assist with the organization and supervision of District volunteers. These officers will come from within the current volunteer firefighter ranks and will hold positions with the current rank structure. The new officers will be expected to meet a set of minimum requirements and will be tested for the position before becoming eligible for promotion. The newly appointed officers will be expected to complete post appointment requirements for their position.

We will appoint at least one Lieutenant to assist with the Operations, Logistics, and Administrative Divisions. The Fire Chief will be responsible for all divisions, and the Lieutenants will report to a Division Chief or directly to the Fire Chief depending on the division they are assigned to. The Lieutenants will be rotated on a regular basis to be determined.

SUMMARY

Through these changes, our goal is to strengthen and enhance our District's volunteer program over the next several years and allow our District to become a model for others to learn from. By creating these two divisions, we will optimize our ability to bring in and appropriately assign members to duties reflective of their training, knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as permit us to expand our ability to serve our constituents.

The Larkspur Fire Protection District Volunteer program has always been strong and filled with many professional individuals regardless of their pay status. Each volunteer member is asked to consider the changes proposed and consider how we may better these changes.

In closing, the creation of these Divisions within our volunteer program is a reflection of our success as an organization. To be clear, there is a place for every volunteer in our organization, and this is neither an attempt to eliminate the need for any specific volunteer nor an attempt to eliminate the volunteer program as a whole.

Purpose: Our Volunteer program is designed to facilitate and provide supplemental staffing for constituent services and emergent responses within the jurisdiction of the Larkspur Fire Protection District and the areas of our mutual aid partners. Through a cadre of well-trained volunteers, the District is able to field a robust workforce capable of enhancing LFPD resources in a cost efficient manner. Collaterally, the LFPD Volunteer program also provides individuals with an opportunity to enter the Fire Service and gain experience and training while serving in a professional organization.

Eligibility requirements: To be eligible to participate in the Volunteer Firefighter program must be a citizen of the United States of America, must be 18 years of age or older, must possess a high school diploma or GED, and must have a current Colorado State Drivers License. Candidates must not have a driving record or history of any serious infractions, repeat conduct or offenses, or information incompatible with a position in the fire service. The driving records of candidates must not render them uninsurable through the District insurance carrier.

Physical condition/examination. All candidates must be in a healthy condition and able to perform the physically demanding tasks of a job in the firefighting profession. The LFPD may conduct physical condition testing through routine physical exams, work capacity testing or other suitable means. Volunteer members are under a continuing obligation to identify any physical or mental condition which may temporarily or permanently affect or impair their ability to perform duties and/or services with the LFPD.

Volunteer Service. All Volunteer Firefighters will provide a minimum of 24 hours of service to the District each month. Volunteer Firefighters do not receive salary and/or pay or other direct compensation from the LFPD. Volunteer Firefighters may be reimbursed for serving as deployed personnel under certain limited circumstances.

Equal Opportunity: The LFPD will review, weigh, examine and select candidates without regard to a person's race, religion, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or any other identifying characteristic or attribute prohibited by law.

Hiring Process: Applicants must meet the above minimum requirements prior to applying. Applications that do not meet these requirements will be returned. Once submitted, all applications will be submitted to the Fire Chief and/or Training Officer for review, or to any personnel as may be designated by the Fire Chief. Applications of suitable candidates may be collected and held until positions become available or there are sufficient applications to process, or for any other reason deemed appropriate by the Fire Chief.

Applicants must supply a current driving record (less than three months old) obtained through the Department of Motor Vehicles or other appropriate and qualified source (applicants must first check with the LFPD to determine if alternate sources are acceptable). Applicants will obtain and provide a criminal background check obtained

from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. In addition, applicants will also authorize and consent to a criminal background investigation. Candidates with any felony conviction are ineligible for service with the LFPD, or any conviction which calls into question their suitability for a position with the District. Adjudications of an offense consistent with guilt shall be treated as a finding of guilt. Candidates must also agree to submit to a drug screen.

Applicants meeting the District's minimum requirements will be contacted to take a written test. The test will include EMS and firefighting knowledge as well as general math and English questions, and may include other areas that may be included to test the candidate's general aptitude, skills, knowledge, and/or abilities.

Upon completion the applicant will be invited to an interview with the Fire Chief or Training Officer, or any officer or panel of officers as may be appointed by the Fire Chief.

Applicants that are approved by the Chief and Training Officer will be called to complete a physical abilities test. Applicants will be given a list of these training events before the testing process.

Actual test scores will be used as part of the selection process in combination of other scores and considerations.

Firefighter I Academy: All new personnel must complete certain minimum training requirements, in particular, Firefighters must complete a Firefighter I Academy. This Academy consists of FF-I, Haz-Mat Operations, S-130/190 Wildland Firefighter, and First Responder classes. The Volunteer Academy will be held on weekends and some weeknights. Training will also include District policies, area familiarization, equipment orientation, and proper conduct.

Driving District Vehicles: In order to drive any District Owned Vehicle, LFPD personnel must first obtain a Driver Operator (D.O.) certification. After obtaining a D.O. certification, Volunteer personnel must complete a Field Instructor program. Once this training and certification has been completed, Volunteers will be allowed to drive vehicles capable of carrying 499 gallons or less of suppressant. To operate vehicles carrying over 500 gallons of suppressant, Volunteers will be required to obtain a Driver Operator Pumper certification.

Uniforms: Volunteer Firefighter personnel will be issued the following uniform items: 1 uniform shirt, 1 pair of slacks, 1 badge, 1 "alpha pager," 1 nameplate, and 1 identification card. These items remain the property of the District and will be returned upon request. Black boots and a black belt will be worn with the uniform and must be supplied by the individual. Additional uniform items not supplied by the District may be purchased by the individual at his/her own cost. While on duty all Firefighters will be in uniform. The Officer in charge of the shift will advise the Firefighter of the proper uniform for the day.

Structure Gear: Each Firefighter will be supplied with a complete set of structure fire “turn-out” or bunker gear. This gear must be maintained per the manufacturer’s instructions and will not be altered without prior approval of the Fire Chief. This gear remains the property of the District and will be returned upon request.

Wildland Gear: Each Firefighter will be supplied with a complete set of wildland fire gear, minus boots and belt. Boots will be supplied by the individual and must be of leather construction with at least an 8 inch upper. This gear must be maintained per the manufacturer’s instructions and will not be altered without prior approval of the Fire Chief. This gear remains the property of the District and will be returned upon request. Additional items not supplied by the District may be purchased by the individual at his/her own cost.

Chain of Command: The chain of command as outlined in the District policies will be followed at all times. When on shift, Volunteer Firefighters will function as part of the team and will take direction from the Officer in charge of the crew or other leader.

Volunteer Coordinator: If appointed, the Volunteer Coordinator will closely coordinate his/her actions with the Fire Chief, EMS Chief, and Training Officer. This position will serve to coordinate all aspects of the Volunteer Firefighter Program, including issues that may from time to time arise with individual Firefighters or programmatic issues that may require attention. Firefighters may go to the Volunteer Coordinator, Training Officer, or any Volunteer Officer with any question or problem not addressed at the shift Officer level.

Assignment to a shift: Volunteers may be assigned to a specific shift, subject to the needs of the District. Volunteers will perform their base level of hours (24 per month) with their assigned shift. Hours of service above 24 hours may be performed with any shift subject to the approval of the shift Lieutenant. It is anticipated that Volunteer members will be periodically rotated to other shifts. When rotated from the supervision of one Lieutenant to another, a memo or other written document will be exchanged between the gaining and losing Lieutenants about the Volunteer member's knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and conduct. Any special training needs will be identified.

Duty Shift: All Volunteer Firefighters are required to provide at least 24 hours of service to the District each month. The 24 hours do not need to be contiguous; but, they will not be less than 4 hour intervals. Shifts must be pulled at an approved station. Volunteer Firefighters will sign up for shifts one month in advance. If a Volunteer wishes to pull a shift for which he/she is not signed up for, the Volunteer must notify a shift Officer of their intention to pull a shift no less than 4 hours prior to the start of that shift. If a Volunteer is signed up for a shift, and he/she cannot make it in, it is the Volunteer’s responsibility to attempt to find coverage for that shift. If unable to find coverage, the Volunteer must immediately notify the shift Officer. Several dropped shifts may be cause for disciplinary action.

Call Backs: During large incidents, Firefighters may be called to help staff the call or the

station. Firefighters are encouraged to respond to the station to help augment staffing during any incident. When returning to the District, Volunteer members operating private vehicles shall drive prudently and shall adhere to all applicable traffic laws and regulations.

Emergency Warning Devices: Unless approved by the Fire Chief, Firefighters will NOT utilize emergency warning devices on personal vehicles while in the District. Firefighters that are authorized to utilize these devices will do so under strict guidance of District policy regarding such devices and the State of Colorado requirements.

Training: Firefighting personnel must continually receive training and education to create, maintain, and enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Volunteers are required to attend at least one District training each month. Any firefighter wishing to attend an out-of-district training should first contact the District Training Officer or Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteer personnel must complete a minimum of 36 hours of training per year. Volunteer members are also required to attend and maintain all required levels of certifications they have obtained (CPR (professional responder), EMT-B, EMT-I, EMT-P, and other specialized skills that require certification and reevaluation). These hours are counted and applied toward the 36 hour annual total.

District Policies: As a member of the District, Volunteer Firefighters will abide by all District policies and procedures. Any item not addressed here or in the policy manual should be addressed through the chain of command.

Senior Volunteer: To hold this title, a Volunteer member must have completed 3 years of continued and satisfactory service to the District, be a certified Firefighter II, an authorized Engineer DOP (Driver Operator Pumper), and be appointed to the rank by the Fire Chief in his or her sole discretion. Senior Volunteers may operate from stations other than those with paid crews. Senior Volunteers may perform the function of Acting Officer and may lead a crew of other Firefighters as required or directed.

Rank: Volunteers may hold a position of rank as deemed appropriate by the Fire Chief.

Conflict of Interest: Firefighters may work or volunteer for another fire or EMS agency without worry of conflict of interest. Volunteers are solely responsible for scheduling their shifts sufficiently in advance to ensure no scheduling conflicts arise. If a situation should arise where a conflict of interest is perceived, the Fire Chief or his/her delegee will make the final decision on its resolution.

Benefits: All Out-of-District Volunteer Firefighters will be afforded the same benefits as In-District Volunteer members (see District Policy Manual).

Probation: All Firefighters will be placed in probationary status for 12 months from the date of hire. At the end of the probationary period, a Volunteer member will undergo an evaluation of performance reviewing their performance, conduct, accomplishments, and training.

Failure to Maintain: Failure to maintain required certificates or failure to maintain required service hours will usually result in the firefighter being placed on probation. If the Volunteer Firefighter is still unable to fulfill his/her obligations to the District, the Firefighter will be dropped from the program. A Firefighter that has been dropped from the program may re-apply in the next hiring cycle.

Disciplinary Action: All disciplinary action will be based upon the Larkspur Fire Protection District's Policy and Procedure manual. A Volunteer member has no expectation of continuing retention in the Volunteer Firefighter Program.

At Will Employment: Volunteer Firefighters are voluntary employees and as such may terminate their relationship with the District at any time for any reason, subject to any financial obligation the Firefighter may have to the District plus any equipment or gear that the Firefighter must return to the LFPD. Similarly, the District may also terminate the relationship at any time for any reason without notice. A Volunteer Firefighter receives no salary or pay, and he/she is therefore not eligible for unemployment benefits.

Members in Good Standing: A member who serves the District for at least the minimum amounts of service required, who obtains and maintains his or her minimum levels of certification, who completes all training at the required levels, and who abides by the District's conduct and performance expectations shall be considered a member of good standing. In the Fire Chief's sole discretion and only for good cause shown, a Volunteer may be given a period of thirty days to restore his or her membership to good standing.

Service Commitment: Prior to attending the training academy, a Volunteer member shall agree that he or she will remain a member in good standing with the LFPD for a period of 24 months beginning with the applicant's graduation from the academy. This agreement shall be formally memorialized in a service agreement that the Volunteer member signs. If a firefighter leaves or fails to complete this required period of service, he or she will be liable to the LFPD in the amount of \$1,000 (or other such amounts that may be formally identified in the service agreement signed by the volunteer member).

Eligibility for Pensions and/or Other Benefits: Only Volunteers in good standing are eligible to receive credit for pensions and/or other benefits.

Time Off: If a Volunteer expects to be away for an extended period and will not be able to maintain the service hours required, the Volunteer Coordinator or Training Officer must be notified in writing. While extended absences are discouraged, reasonable concessions can be made. Absences longer than 6 months without good cause (with the exception of military duty) will result in being dropped from the program.

Full-Time Hiring: Volunteer Firefighters may apply for full-time employment with the District when and if a position is available. An application for employment and testing may be required.