

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

P O L I C Y

SUBJECT:	<i>Volunteer Fire Department (VFD)</i>	POLICY NO:	B4.4
	<i>Terms and Conditions of Service</i>	CROSS REF.:	
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PURPOSE

This policy establishes the general terms and conditions of service for volunteer firefighters of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN).

SCOPE

This policy and *Terms and Conditions of Service* apply to all persons involved in volunteer firefighting for the RDN.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Policy are:

- a) to safeguard the morale of the service, the well-being of the volunteers and positive working relations
- b) to encourage efficiency in operations and effectiveness in serving the public; and,
- c) to recognize the value of open communication and respect in all matters pertaining to the Volunteer Fire Department (VFD)

DEFINITIONS

“RDN” means the Regional District of Nanaimo, its departments, and authorities

“VFD” means the Volunteer Fire Department and its members

“Senior Officers” means the Fire Chief, the Deputy Chief and the Training Officer

“Officers” means the Fire Chief, the Deputy Chief, the Training Officer, the Captains and Lieutenants

“Members” means all Volunteer VFD Officers and volunteer firefighters

“Fire Protection Area” means the boundaries of the Fire Protection Service as established by Bylaw and amended from time to time.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy replaces the *Regulations for The Officers and Other Members of the Nanoose Volunteer Fire Department*.

POLICY OR PROCEDURE AMENDMENTS

The RDN reserves the right to amend this policy at any time.

The RDN commits to reviewing changes to this Policy with the VFD members prior to their implementation. This Policy will be made available on the RDN website and may be updated periodically. Hard copies can be made available upon the member’s request to the Manager, Emergency Services.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The VFD shall not respond to a fire or emergency outside the limits of the Fire Protection Area except:

- a) when in the opinion of the Fire Chief (or Senior Officer in the Fire Chief’s absence) the fire or emergency threatens property in the Fire Protection Area,
- b) in another area with which an agreement has been entered into to provide fire protection, or
- c) on property with respect to which an agreement has been entered into with any person or corporation to provide protection therefore.
- d) an emergency authorization by the Fire Chief (or Senior Officer in command in the Fire Chief’s absence), to dispatch equipment to another area for disaster or when assistance has been specifically requested by another fire department.

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICER ROLES

The Officers of the VFD shall consist of a Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief, a Training Officer and not less than two Captains and/or two Lieutenants, or as otherwise determined by the RDN.

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

- a) Members will perform and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.
- b) Anyone who volunteers with the VFD is bound by the:
 - Fire Department Operational Guidelines as may be amended from time to time
 - Firefighter Code of Ethics

CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT

To be appointed to the Volunteer Fire Department, a person must:

- a) Reside in the specific Fire Protection Area or within 10 minutes of the fire hall in order for the department to meet dwelling protection grades;
- b) be between the ages of eighteen (18) and sixty (60) years;
 - The Fire Department may accept Junior Members who are between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age, and Cadet Members who are between thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) years of age. Junior and Cadet Members may not enter a burning building or drive vehicles. Other restrictions may be laid upon Juniors or Cadets from time to time by order of the Fire Chief.
 - The Fire Department may accept area residents over the age of 60 as senior members. Such members may be assigned to restricted duties as required by any governing regulations and consistent with their ability to perform the duties assigned.
- c) be able to meet the BC competency and training playbook standards (the training program);
- d) be able to meet NFPA 1001 standards as determined by the Fire Department;
- e) meet the physical and medical assessment requirements of the Fire Service, which can include but is not limited to CPAT physical testing and *PAR-Q* Medical clearance forms. These requirements must be met on appointment and no greater than every two years thereafter. All members of age 55 or over shall be required to have a yearly, complete medical examination at no cost to the individual; and

- f) be of good character, which means at a minimum adhering to the *Firefighters Code of Ethics* attached to and part of this policy.

Note: an unsuccessful applicant may submit a new application should they decide to seek Membership at a later date.

Any member who appears unfit for duty may be ordered to have a complete physical examination at the discretion of the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief.

Any member may have their appointment as a member of the VFD revoked at the recommendation of the Fire Chief. The recommendation will be reviewed and the decision to revoke any member appointment will be determined by the RDN Manager, Emergency Services, the General Manager, Transportation and Emergency Services and the RDN Human Resources Department.

GENERAL DUTIES OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT SENIOR ROLES

Fire Chief

- a) The Fire Chief is responsible to the RDN Manager, Emergency Services for all matters pertaining to the operation of the Fire Department; and the Fire Chief shall attend meetings (when requested) and submit a monthly report in a stipulated format.
- b) The Fire Chief shall exercise general supervision of all the affairs of the VFD. The Fire Chief shall carry out and enforce the Regulations of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief will perform other duties as described in the Fire Chiefs job description.
- c) The Fire Chief shall be in complete charge at all emergencies and at practices unless the Fire Chief delegates this responsibility. In the Fire Chief's absence, the Senior Officer or Member present shall act as Fire Chief, exercising all the powers of the Fire Chief.
- d) It shall be the duty of the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and Training officer to jointly appoint Captains and Lieutenants from among the Members according to their qualifications and experience, and when necessary terminate such appointments. The organizational structure is to be designated and posted.
- e) The Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and Training Officer shall jointly decide upon the total number of Active Members, Senior Members, Junior Members and Cadet Members to be considered the "effective strength" of the Fire Department and submit for approval to the RDN. They will be responsible for keeping the Active Volunteer complement at that level, but never below the minimum strength of fifteen (15) as laid down in the *Fire Underwriters Insurance* minimum requirements per fire station.

- f) The Fire Chief shall ensure that all members complete a satisfactory criminal record check upon application and thereafter as requested by the Fire Chief.
- g) The Fire Chief shall ensure that the residents of the area are kept informed of fire hazards in the community and of the activities of the Department.
- h) The Fire Chief shall see that each fire is investigated as required, to determine the cause, if possible. In the case of suspicious circumstances, the Fire Chief shall secure and preserve all possible evidence for future use.
- i) The Fire Chief shall appoint such committees as may be required from time to time, including:
 - i. *Safety Committee* - shall operate as per Operational Guideline 1.04.00

The term of duty of each Committee shall be established by the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief shall be an ex-officio member of every committee.

Deputy Fire Chief

- a) It shall be the duty of the Deputy Fire Chief;
 - i. To perform the duties of the Fire Chief, in the Fire Chief's absence.
 - ii. To assist the Fire Chief in the discharge of the Fire Chief's duties.
 - iii. Other duties as described in the Deputy Chief's job description.

Training Officer

- a) The Training Officer is responsible to
 - i. perform the duties of the Fire Chief or Deputy Fire Chief in their absence.
 - ii. determine VFD training needs in consultation with the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief,
 - iii. maintain training records for all members of the VFD,
 - iv. develop department training programs,
 - v. evaluate continuity of training, and conducting training, as required.
 - vi. perform other duties as described in the Training Officers' job description

Captains and Lieutenants

- a) The Captains and Lieutenants shall carry out duties as delegated to them by the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief or Training Officer.
- b) The term of duty of each Captain and Lieutenant shall be for one year or until the calendar year end, unless terminated at an earlier date by the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and Training Officer shall fill the Captain and Lieutenant vacancies so created by making appointments forthwith.

AVAILABILITY and ATTENDANCE (Meetings and Practices)

All members are responsible for participating in training activities and for maintaining personal and professional competence relative to the skill and knowledge levels required of their perspective position within the VFD.

Any member failing to follow the *Operational Guidelines* that includes attendance will have their appointment status in the VFD reviewed by the Fire Chief.

All members are expected to attend at a minimum seventy-five per cent (75%) of all training practices and twenty-five per cent (25%) of all call outs:

- a) No member shall be excused from attending any meeting or practice except on grounds of sickness, work, holiday, or while on leave of absence granted by the Fire Chief (such leaves may be up to three (3) months and may be extended by the Fire Chief up one (1) year).
- b) Any member whose attendance falls below 75% may have their appointment as a member of the VFD revoked. The member will be given the opportunity to demonstrate there were extenuating circumstances for not meeting the attendance expectation.
- c) Should a Member be absent for reasons covered in section a), it shall be recorded in the attendance record.

A Member unable to maintain minimum attendance requirements is to notify the Fire Chief or Senior Officers.

RECRUITMENT

Applications for Membership as a Volunteer Firefighter will be received in writing by the fire department. When a vacancy arises, the applicant will be invited to attend an oral and practical interview, or other assessment. If successful, the applicant must complete medical and physical assessment requirements before attending the first convenient regular practice. The applicant shall comply with all other requirements. The applicant will be introduced to all members present. The applicant will serve a minimum of a twelve-month probationary period.

When the position of Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief or Training Officer becomes vacant, the position will be posted by the RDN for a minimum of two weeks. A hiring committee comprised of:

- the Fire Chief or Senior Officer;
- the Manager of Emergency Services;
- the General Manager of Transportation and Emergency Services; and
- RDN Human Resources

Will be created to assess and select the most qualified candidate. If unanimous consensus of the committee cannot be reached, no hiring will occur without the support of the senior management member of the fire department for bona fide reasons.

When in the opinion of the hiring committee, all factors for promotion are equal; seniority of service in the fire department will govern.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF VFD MEMBERS

Orientation

All members shall be provided with a copy of the RDN *Volunteer Fire Service* policy and *Operational Guidelines* and are expected to be familiar with them and any future amendments. Immediate supervisors are responsible for conducting a departmental orientation session with all new members. As required by *Workers' Compensation Act* legislation, supervisors will provide new members with a requisite safety orientation prior to commencing any activities.

All members shall have the opportunity to contact RDN Financial Services payroll (financepayroll@rdn.bc.ca) to ask financial questions they may have.

Probation review

Members shall complete a probationary period of twelve (12) months' service to determine suitability for continued appointment.

The Fire Chief will meet with the member every three (3) months during the probationary period to review the members' performance. Should the member prove unsuitable, appointment to the Fire Department will be terminated. In specific situations, the Fire Chief, with the agreement of the member, may extend the probationary period.

Probationary members are governed by the Rules and Guidelines for Probationary Members, which form part of this policy.

Performance review

Every member should have the opportunity to grow and develop in the Fire Department. The opportunity for growth and development is determined by both the member's interest and

abilities and the needs of the fire service. Performance discussions will be regular and ongoing; however, should any member wish to have a more formal review, a review with the Fire Chief can be scheduled.

Educational Reimbursement

- a) When a member is required to attend educational courses or conferences or upgrading courses related to the Fire Department, the RDN shall cover fees and reasonable costs incurred on a pre-approved basis. Members required to take designated courses and/or examinations shall be eligible to receive reimbursement for travel expenses at prevailing federal rates (transportation, food and lodging) upon pre-approval from the Fire Chief.
- b) A member, who is approved by the Fire Chief to attend education or upgrading courses related to the Fire Department and for which the RDN has paid, and fails to successfully complete the course may be required to successfully complete the course at the member's own expense, or to repay the expense of the course. Any such retesting or course costs will be at the expense of the member.
- c) When a member attends a course or takes an examination, not required under the previous paragraphs, with the advance approval of the Fire Chief, the RDN may, at its sole discretion, reimburse the member for some or all of the fees and travel expenses (transportation food and lodging) at prevailing federal rates and may grant leave of absence.

Corrective Action

The goal of the corrective action process is to provide an environment through training, development and supportive management for the member to correct their behaviour or performance as quickly as possible and to grow from the experience. However, there are times when there is a need for improvement. This may include on-the-job performance as well as general corrective action.

Performance related issues will be addressed verbally prior to engaging in the *Formal Warning* process.

Depending on the specific circumstances of the situation, the corrective action process may be shortened or truncated.

The corrective action process is as follows:

1. First Formal Warning

The written warning explaining the behaviour, its consequences and what the member needs to do to correct the situation, must be shown to the member prior to entering such material into that member's personnel file. In addition, such member shall be given the

opportunity of acknowledging, by signature, that they have seen the entry. The member will receive a copy of the written warning.

2. Second Formal Warning

If the behaviour or situation does not improve, the member will receive a second formal warning stating when it is expected the member will correct the action. The written warning will also state, "Any further violation could result in termination." The written warning is to be signed by the Fire Chief and the member, and it will be filed in the member's personnel file. The member will receive a copy of the warning.

3. Appointment Revoked

Should a member fail to make the changes detailed in the formal warning process, the RDN may revoke the person's appointment to the VFD.

Upon written request by the member, formal warning documentation may be removed from the member's personal file only after completion of a three (3) year period from the time of the incident and where there has been no recurrence of the behaviours which led to the warning.

In order to ensure material is removed from a member's file, the member will provide a written request to the Fire Chief who will review the file and remove the material as long as the conditions outlined have been met and return the material to the member.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

A member who is dissatisfied with any personnel rules or in any aspect of the terms and conditions of appointment is expected to bring the matter to the attention of the Fire Chief. If the matter involves the Fire Chief, the matter will be brought to the Manager, Emergency Services.

RECOGNITION AND ENGAGEMENT

Material of a positive or complimentary nature, such as letters of commendation, will be shown to the member and subsequently placed in their personnel file.

BENEFITS and HONORARIA

Honoraria and any benefits coverage will be structured in accordance with the standards established by the RDN.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

Professional Associations and Memberships

The RDN will pay membership dues in collaboration with the Fire Chief for Senior Officers for Fire Service-related Associations subject to budget approval.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in Regional District facilities or in vehicles as per Policy A3.10

Impairment from Performing Duties

- a) No member may participate at any fire, practice or meeting if impaired by alcohol or any other drug, or substance, including fatigue. The judgement of the Fire Chief or Senior Officer present or on the scene is final on the matter.
- b) Any offense under this heading is grounds for having their appointment as a member of the VFD revoked.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Any requests for information from the media (such as newspapers, television, etc.) must be referred to the Fire Chief who will coordinate with the RDN Communications Coordinator.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

- a) Members will be as transparent as possible with the public concerning the conduct of VFD and RDN business while respecting the need to protect information that is designated as confidential. All communications should be discussed and approved by the RDN Communications Coordinator.
- b) Confidential information will only be shared with individuals authorized to see it.
- c) The provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* will be respected especially with respect to the protection of personal or private business information.
- d) Members shall not disclose or discuss details of any person or organization being considered for employment or contract except with those VFD or RDN officials directly involved in the selection process.

EQUIPMENT USE

- a) No member shall drive the fire apparatus unless properly qualified and directed to do so by the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, or by an Officer delegated by them. Members shall observe all traffic regulations.
- b) No person, not a member of the Department, unless authorized by a Department Officer, shall be allowed to ride on the apparatus or to handle equipment.
- c) When equipment or apparatus is involved in an accident, the driver shall immediately report the incident to the Officer-in-Charge and both shall make a written report to the Fire Chief.
- d) Any member involved in an accident while on duty in a private car, shall immediately report the accident to the Officer-in-Charge and both shall make written report to the Fire Chief.
- e) Any injuries incurred in the performance of duties shall be reported immediately to the Officer-in-Charge and both shall make written report to the Fire Chief.

RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR PROBATIONARY MEMBERS

- a) As a probationary member you will serve a minimum twelve-month probationary period (this period may be extended).
- b) After serving your probationary period, you will be assessed as to whether you have met your probationary requirements. Following a successful assessment, you will be offered membership with the department
- c) Beards and moustaches are not allowed if they interfere with an air mask seal.
- d) Members must notify the officer in charge when leaving duty.
- e) Probationary cadet or junior members may not enter burning buildings or drive fire vehicles.
- f) No member shall be excused from attending any meeting or practice except on grounds of sickness, work, holiday, or while on leave of absence granted by the Fire Chief (such leaves may be up to three (3) months and may be extended by the Fire Chief up one (1) year). Members should contact the Fire Chief or Senior Officers to tell why they cannot make the meeting or practice.
- g) Members must not talk about Fire Department business outside the VFD. The Fire Chief is the only spokesperson for the department, and any questions on a fire will be directed to the Chief.

- h) Members shall obey and respect officers at all times.
- i) As a probationary member, you should familiarize yourself with the posted *Volunteer Terms and Conditions of Appointment* and operational guidelines.
- j) Probationers must complete physical and medical assessment requirements of the Fire Service before participating in any fire related activities including but not limited to fire and emergency responses, training and practices.

Addendum to Volunteer Fire Department Policy

Firefighter Code of Ethics

I understand that I have the responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that reflects proper ethical behavior and integrity. In so doing, I will help foster a continuing positive public perception of the fire service. Therefore, I pledge the following...

- Always conduct myself, on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively on myself, my department and the fire service in general.
- Accept responsibility for my actions and for the consequences of my actions.
- Support the concept of fairness and the value of diverse thoughts and opinions.
- Avoid situations that would adversely affect the credibility or public perception of the fire service profession.
- Be truthful and honest at all times and report instances of cheating or other dishonest acts that compromise the integrity of the fire service.
- Conduct my personal affairs in a manner that does not improperly influence the performance of my duties, or bring discredit to my organization.
- Be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.
- Recognize that I serve in a position of public trust that requires stewardship in the honest and efficient use of publicly owned resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles and equipment and that these are protected from misuse and theft.
- Exercise professionalism, competence, respect and loyalty in the performance of my duties and use information, confidential or otherwise, gained by virtue of my position, only to benefit those I am entrusted to serve.
- Avoid financial investments, outside employment, outside business interests or activities that conflict with or are enhanced by my official position or have the potential to create the perception of impropriety.
- Never propose or accept personal rewards, special privileges, benefits, advancement, honors or gifts that may create a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof.
- Never engage in activities involving alcohol or other substance use or abuse that can impair my mental state or the performance of my duties and compromise safety.

- Never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap.
- Never harass, intimidate or threaten fellow members of the service or the public and stop or report the actions of other firefighters who engage in such behaviors.
- Responsibly use social networking, electronic communications, or other media technology opportunities in a manner that does not discredit, dishonor or embarrass my organization, the fire service and the public. I also understand that failure to resolve or report inappropriate use of this media equates to condoning this behavior.

From the International Fire Chiefs Association