

WEST VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Candidate Manual



Commitment  Honor  Sacrifice

(Public Release Version)

October 2024

I have no ambition in this world but one, and that is to be a firefighter. The position may, in the eyes of some, appear to be a lowly one; but we who know the work which a firefighter has to do believe that his is a noble calling.

We strive to preserve from destruction the wealth of the world, which is the product of the industry of men, necessary for the comfort of both the rich and the poor. We are the defenders from fire of the art which has beautified the world, the product of the genius of men and the means of the refinement of mankind.

But above all, our proudest endeavor is to save the lives of men—The work of God himself.

Under the impulse of such thoughts, the nobility of the occupation thrills us and stimulates us to deeds of daring, even at the supreme sacrifice. Such considerations may not strike the average mind, but they are sufficient to fill the limit of our ambition in life and to make us serve the general purpose of human society.

Chief Edward F. Croker, FDNY
Circa 1910

Welcome to the best profession on earth! As a new applicant, there are some things you will need to accomplish and be aware of prior to being accepted for full membership. This manual will outline some of those requirements. Please read the entire document carefully so you can fully understand your duties and responsibilities. You will be held responsible for the contents of this manual.

Our Mission Statement

The basic mission of the West Valley Fire Department is to prevent or minimize the loss of life and property from the effects of fire or other emergencies and to render such public assistance as may be determined by the Fire Chief or higher authority.

Just so you know: This is a busy department, and we will demand a lot of your time (not just Thursday nights). Please speak with your family, friends, and employer about this prior to committing to the WVFD. We will be spending a lot of taxpayer money on training and equipping you; we can't afford to waste those funds. We average between 120-150 emergency responses per month, at all hours of the day and night. That is in addition to the public education, display, and stand-by requests we regularly receive. The only reward you can expect for your service is our heartfelt thanks and the warm, fuzzy feeling you get from helping someone in their time of need.

General Expectations of Candidates

1. Treat the members of this (and any other) Public Safety organization (Other FD's, Life Ambulance, Sheriff's Office, Utilities companies, etc) with respect—they have earned it. Treat our customers as you would expect your family members to be treated during an emergency.
2. Get familiar with—and use—the Chain of Command. While on probation, you are assigned to the Assistant Chief of Administration and Support—please don't hesitate to contact him with questions or concerns, but it is usually best to try and resolve an issue at the lowest possible level. A listing of our officers, along with their picture and e-mail address, is on our web site (www.wvfd.info). That will help you to recognize them.
3. Concentrate on your studies, but help out where needed. Don't wait to be asked. Occasionally work parties will be organized to clean a rig or station, pull weeds, test hose, etc. You are expected to participate. Not necessarily every time, but enough to show you care about this Department. If you don't have the time for those types of activities, chances are you will not have the time to respond to calls after probation. The officers will take that into consideration when deciding whether to release you.
4. Take advantage of every opportunity to learn. Read some of the magazines in the back of the training room, open rig compartments, and ask a lot of questions—of the Chiefs, other officers, and other members. A lot of what we say or do will seem strange. Any of our members will be happy to explain tools or procedures to you.
5. Take some initiative! We pride ourselves on having clean rigs and stations. We often receive visitors to our station from outside agencies; they always comment on the cleanliness of the station. We have no maid service; it is all performed by us. If you see something that needs to be done, take care of it. Don't wait for someone to tell you to do it. Initiative is contagious!
6. After the Thursday meetings, grab the cleaning equipment and clean the front lobby, including the restrooms. Automatically. Cleaning restrooms is not a belittling task—take some pride in it. It shows your attention to detail (if you can't remember to stock the toilet paper or soap dispensers, how will you remember to check the air pressure or hose connections on an SCBA?), and also takes the load off the Thursday night Station Duty crew (it goes a lot quicker with 8 or 10 people doing it, than it does with 2—the whole teamwork thing).
7. We will do our best to keep you informed via e-mail of upcoming events (check your e-mail daily). We expect the same from you. If you will be missing a meeting or training session, let us know so we are not wondering about you.
8. Be honest with yourself and us. Several people have applied to this organization, only to realize they cannot fulfill their obligations. In part, that is what the probationary period is for—deciding whether you and this Department are a good fit for each other. If you can't do it, no problem—just let us know.
9. There is a poster in the training room listing several things a Candidate should be doing or not doing. It is presented in a humorous way, but its content is serious.

Training Sessions

1. Training is held every Thursday, from 1900-approx 2200 (sometimes longer). The second Thursday is EMS training, and the last Thursday of the month is reserved for the Business Meeting. All remaining Thursday nights are fire training. Weekly e-mails are sent to announce the topic.
2. Be among the first to show up for training session. Bring your notebook and a pen. Sign in on the sheet, and sit in the front row. Put your cell phone away.
3. You are required to participate in at least 50% of training sessions and meetings over the course of your probationary period. In addition, if you miss five sessions in a row, you will be dropped from consideration.
4. You are required to attend the EMS continuing education classes even if you are not yet an EMS Provider. These classes will help you prepare for when you do attend an EMT class, and until that time, the knowledge will make you more valuable at any scenes you respond to.
5. Dress appropriately. Your uniforms will be issued upon release from probation. Until then, we still ask that you project a professional image, to include being clean-shaven. Much of our fire and EMS training is hands-on; wear comfortable clothing that is in good repair. Business meetings are a semi-formal event—dress appropriately. A uniform policy letter is attached.
6. Bring your tools. Just as you wouldn't enter a burning structure without the proper tools, you should not enter a classroom without your learning tools (a pen and paper to take notes with).

Your FEMA Student ID (SID) Number

A FEMA SID is required to register for and participate in any training provided by FEMA. All FEMA training providers' registration systems and enrollment procedures require a valid FEMA SID. The FEMA SID will serve as your unique identifier (in lieu of using your Social Security Number) and be used to maintain the record of FEMA training you attended.

To register for a SID, go to: <https://cdp.dhs.gov/femasid/register>. Save this number—you will use it throughout your Fire Service career!

Requirements for Release

During your probationary period, you will be challenged mentally and physically. The purpose of your probationary period is to get you trained on our equipment and procedures to a level that will allow you to function as a team member during emergency responses. To that end, the following items must be completed prior to being released from probation—**do not wait until the last minute to do them!** If you fail to accomplish them by your scheduled release date, you will not be released. However, in some extreme cases, an extension may be granted, if the board of officers feels you deserve one. For your convenience, a check-off sheet is attached at the end of this manual. Use it to track your progress. When you have completed all objectives, turn in the check-off sheet to the Admin Chief.

1. Probationary Firefighters Workbook. Download it from the emergency reporting.com library, fill it out (using the rules and regulations found in the library), and return it to the Admin Chief. The purpose of this is to get you familiar with our procedures. Part two of this workbook contains a series of skill sheets for core firefighter tasks. These skills must be demonstrated to any certified (red-helmet) firefighter prior to your release.
2. Incident Command System Training: The federal government has mandated that as emergency responders, each of us has an understanding of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The incident Command System (ICS) that we use on scenes is a component of NIMS. To fulfill our training requirements, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides several on-line training courses that are available to us at no charge. These courses can be accessed using any internet-ready computer at: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.aspx>. All classes listed below must be completed prior to being released from probation:

IS-100.c [Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100](#)
IS-200.c [ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)
IS-700.b [National Incident Management System \(NIMS\) An Introduction](#)
IS-800.d [National Response Framework, An Introduction](#)

Be careful to select the classes specified, not one of the variants such as those tailored to healthcare, public works, or law enforcement personnel. To take the class, click on the course name, then “Interactive Web-based Course” in the “Take This Course” box.

As you pass each test, a link will be e-mailed to you within a day or so. Click on the link, and a certificate shows up. Print it out and put it in a binder with all your other certs. Then, please forward a copy of the e-mail to the Asst Chief. He will mark you off as having completed the module and give you the appropriate SFFMA training credit.

3. Self-Study Question Sets: To give you a basic understanding of some of the concepts and terminology associated with the Fire Service, we require you to complete several (13) packets of question sets. These questions are based on SFFMA training objectives; most come from a recognized textbook. The question sets are in the ERS Library; the textbook will be issued to you after you complete Part 1 of your workbook and the online Incident Command System Training Modules. Some questions are specific to the West Valley FD and will require you to examine our apparatus or interview other members. An Assistant Chief will provide you with a key fob to allow you access to the station for purposes of conducting this research.

Although your book will not be issued right away, please print out the question sets and put them in a binder. Bring your binder whenever you are at the station—several of the questions will be answered during regular training sessions, or you may find a sympathetic member willing to help you out with some of them—that will put you ahead of the game when you do get your book.

Note: This requirement may be waived if you already hold firefighter certifications from a recognized agency.

4. Courage To Be Safe (CTBS) on-line training. In March 2004, the National Fallen firefighters Foundation put together their 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives—Everyone Goes Home program as part of their Courage to be Safe initiative. It was created to ensure the safety, and long lives, of all fire protection personnel. The Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP) and State Firefighters and Fire Marshals Association (SFFMA) both require completion of this program as a prerequisite for certification. To enroll in this course, go to: https://www.fireherolearningnetwork.com/Training_Programs/Courage_To_Be_Safe.aspx

At the end of the program, save the certificate as a .pdf file and e-mail it to the Assistant Chief.

5. Cancer Awareness Training. This class is also mandated by TCFP and SFFMA. Being a firefighter brings with it the increased risk of contracting cancer. This online, one-hour course will help you learn more about the common cancer-causing agents firefighters may face on the job as well as the importance of wearing proper PPE and using decontamination techniques to help reduce exposure to toxic substances and increase firefighter health and quality of life. Class may be accessed at: <https://www.ppe101.com/firefighter-cancer-free-online-training/>. Save your certificate as a .pdf and email it to the Assistant Chief.

6. Physical Exam. This assessment must be completed prior to being released. Additional information will be provided upon your acceptance as a Candidate.
7. EMS Certifications/ CPR card. Turn copies of these in to the Assistant Chief. **You must be certified in CPR prior to release from probation.** Classes are scheduled on a regular basis; dates are promulgated via e-mail. Your CPR card must be kept on your person at all times.
8. Criminal background check and drivers history: These will be conducted by the Fire Chief. The need for this should be self-explanatory.
9. Copies of your driver's license and insurance. Bring those documents with you—we can make the copies here. Turn these in to the Assistant Chief of Operations. **You must have a current, valid driver's license** (TX Class "C", or equivalent, if you live out of state) prior to release from probation. A Class B license is required for operating our larger vehicles, but it is not necessary to obtain one prior to release.
10. Personal Protective Equipment. Your gear will be issued to you a couple weeks into your probationary period. This gear will be kept locked in the station for use during training evolutions. Contact the Training Chief to arrange a time to get fitted with PPE, and to receive training on the inspection, maintenance and documentation requirements. You must accomplish this prior to participating in hands-on training evolutions. Gear will not be issued before or during training sessions—that will cut into valuable instruction time.

Although the prerequisites listed above must be accomplished before release, **they are not the only requirements**. As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, your goal as a Candidate is to be ready to be an effective crew member once released. This means knowing the location and use of firefighting equipment, knowing which rigs are stored at each station, being familiar with radio procedures, and a multitude of other little details. In short, take an active role in your own training! Participate, ask questions, and pay attention. The more effort you put into your training, the more effective you will be.

Uniform Policy for Probationary Members:

1. Purpose

Uniforms are used to identify our members, convey professionalism and allow for responder safety. The purpose of this policy is to clarify what uniform items may or may not be worn by probationary members.

2. Required Items

Members are issued a "FD Candidate" T-shirt at the time they are accepted to probationary membership. That is the only uniform item issued to, or required of, probationary members. A full complement of uniforms will be issued to you upon release from probation.

The Candidate T-shirt is expected to be worn at all times the member is participating in official activities. Official activities include, but are not limited to business meetings and training sessions, displays and presentations, station duty ride-alongs, engaging in Computer Based Training, etc. Conversely, this shirt shall not be worn when not engaged in official activities. This T-shirt will be worn tucked-in.

All clothing items worn while in uniform will be clean and present a professional appearance. Pants shall not be torn or ripped, and will be of a dark color. Shoes shall not be open-toed, and will have a flat sole.

Probationary members will follow the same rules as full members for grooming, hair length, earrings, etc.

3. Optional Items

Uniform requirements for full members are contained in the WVFD manuals. Probationary members are neither encouraged nor discouraged from obtaining and wearing clothing items (pants and boots) that match those requirements.

The only headgear authorized to be worn by probationary members is a baseball-type cap, navy blue in color, without insignia or decoration. Knit watch caps (beanies), dark blue or black in color, without decoration or insignia may be worn during periods of cold weather.

A sweatshirt, navy blue in color, may be worn under the Candidate T-shirt if desired. Alternatively, a "job shirt", meeting the specifications for those worn by full members, may be worn. No decoration or insignia may be visible on the exposed portions of the sweatshirt. The job shirt may be embroidered with the candidates name only; no other insignia may be attached to it. Probationary members will not be reimbursed for the costs of any uniform items.

4. Prohibited Items

T-shirts and caps bearing an unofficial WVFD logo are available at retail stores. Probationary members are neither encouraged nor discouraged from purchasing these items. However, these unofficial items may not be worn while in uniform at any time, regardless of your membership status.

By design, the FD Candidate shirts do not indicate membership in a specific Fire Department. Nothing indicating you are a member of the WVFD (including the red jackets) will be worn while performing FD duties.

Nothing bringing discredit upon the Fire Service or the WVFD may be worn while representing the Fire Department

5. Exceptions

In rare cases, officer may authorize temporary exceptions to this policy.

Social Media Policy for Probationary Members

1. As with most tools, social media can make life easier. Conversely, if used in an improper or careless manner, the effects may be harmful.
2. As a Candidate, you are not officially a member of the West Valley Fire Department—that title must be earned. Do not make any posts or photos indicating your affiliation with the WVFD or ESD2 on your various social media accounts.
3. Once you have been accepted for full membership, do not post any messages or photos that may bring discredit upon the Fire Service or the WVFD.
4. ESD2 policy is that no photos may be taken at an incident scene, unless they are taken with an ESD-owned camera, for the purpose of official documentation. Scene photos taken on personally-owned cameras (including cellular telephones) can result in civil and/or criminal HIPAA violations and seizure of your camera as evidence.
5. Violations of this policy will lead to dismissal from this Organization.





Interpreting Officer Rank Insignia

In the early days, of North American fire departments, orders were given to the troops, by officers, through the use of a large brass device that resembles a megaphone. These were very ornate brass horns, commonly called “bugles” or speaking trumpets. The person with the bugle hanging from his neck or shoulder was easily identified as the person in charge.



Typical 1800s fire officer.
Note the Speaking Trumpet
(bugle)

Officers became identified with these objects so a small pin in the shape of a bugle became a type of rank insignia for officers. The more “bugles on his collar” the higher the rank. As a Candidate, you are expected to recognize the rank associated with various insignia:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Collar Insignia</u>	<u>Insignia Color</u>	<u>Helmet (front) Color</u>
Lieutenant		Silver	Black (black)
Captain		Gold	Black (white)
Assistant Chief		Gold	White (white)
Chief		Gold	White (white)

Texas Emergency Services Retirement System (TESRS)

TESRS is a state agency that administers a pension system for volunteer fire and emergency departments across the state. In addition to retirement benefits, active members are covered by survivor and disability benefits and may be eligible for a [tuition benefit](#). Additional information may be found below, or by visiting www.tesrs.org

Texas Emergency Services Retirement System



TESRS

They protect us. We protect them.

What is TESRS?

We are a pension system for volunteer firefighters and first responders with 199 active departments across Texas.

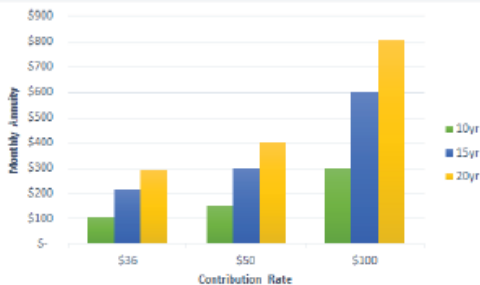
TESRS works with governing entities such as cities, counties and emergency services districts (ESDs) who provide contributions to the system for the volunteers. The minimum contribution rate is \$36 a month per volunteer.

Retirement Benefit

Members are 50% vested at 10 years of qualified service, and are eligible to receive a lifetime annuity at age 55.

Members are fully vested at 15 years of qualified service, and are eligible to receive a lifetime annuity at age 55.

Once fully vested, every additional year of qualified service will compound a member's annuity by 6.2 percent.



*graph above based on years of Qualified Service

How does your department join? Contact us!

P.O. Box 12577, Austin, TX 78711

Phone: 512-936-3372

Fax: 512-936-3480

Email: outreach@tesrs.texas.gov

www.tesrs.texas.gov



Disability Benefit

If a volunteer is injured in the line of duty, and is unable to work or attend school, they are eligible to receive \$400 a month at the minimum contribution rate.

For every \$12 above the minimum contribution rate that is provided, the disability benefit increases by \$50.

Death Benefits

On-Duty

If a member dies in the line of duty, the member's beneficiary is eligible to receive a lump-sum of \$100,000.

The surviving spouse and dependents will receive in equal shares a fully vested retirement annuity.

Off-duty

If an active member dies while off-duty, the member's beneficiary is eligible to receive a lump sum payment equal to at least 15 years of contribution payments.

If the beneficiary is also the surviving spouse, the spouse elects to receive either:

- The lump-sum described above; or,
- Two-thirds of a lifetime annuity if the member was vested in the system (beginning on the date the member would have been age 55).

Survivor Benefits

If a member dies after retirement, the surviving spouse is eligible to receive 2/3rds of the annuity the deceased member was receiving.

If a member dies before retirement, but has met the minimum vesting qualifications, the surviving spouse is eligible to receive 2/3rds of the annuity that would have been paid had the deceased member retired on the day of death.

As a member of the West Valley FD, you will be eligible to be entered into the TESRS system upon your release from probation. The Assistant Chief will provide you with a Form 502 (enrollment form) upon your release; fill it out and return it to him ASAP to begin your enrollment.

Long-term Benefit Calculator

Long-term Benefits for a retiree at a \$36 Contribution Rate

	Years of Qualified Service			
	10	15	20	25
Monthly Benefits	\$108	\$216	\$292	\$395
Annual Benefits	\$1,296	\$2,592	\$3,504	\$4,740
Lifetime Benefits (age 55 to age 85)	\$38,880	\$77,760	\$105,120	\$142,200

Long-term Benefits for a retiree at a \$50 Contribution Rate

	Years of Qualified Service			
	10	15	20	25
Monthly Benefits	\$150	\$300	\$406	\$548
Annual Benefits	\$1,800	\$3,600	\$4,872	\$6,576
Lifetime Benefits (age 55 to age 85)	\$54,000	\$108,000	\$146,160	\$197,280

Long-term Benefits for a retiree at a \$100 Contribution Rate

	Years of Qualified Service			
	10	15	20	25
Monthly Benefits	\$300	\$600	\$811	\$1,095
Annual Benefits	\$3,600	\$7,200	\$9,732	\$13,140
Lifetime Benefits (age 55 to age 85)	\$108,000	\$216,000	\$291,960	\$394,200

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www.tesrs.texas.gov



**Texas Emergency Services
 Retirement System**

Station Duty Ride-Along Policy

As a Candidate, you will not typically be responding to emergency calls. There are some exceptions to this:

- You are at the station participating in training and have been invited to respond by a member.
- You are specifically requested for manpower via telephone. We may request your assistance during an extended operation, or with cleanup after a large fire
- You are on an authorized “ride along” with a station duty crew.

You are encouraged to ride along with a station duty crew at least a couple times during your probationary period. This lets you get some experience running calls, get a feel for station life, and lets us see how you act under pressure and interact with our customers. However, a couple things to keep in mind when pulling station duty:

1. You will be functioning in mostly an observation mode. However, if the situation requires an extra pair of hands, you will be pressed in to service. We require you to have a valid CPR card prior to riding along.
2. Copies of the duty roster are posted on the bulletin board. If you plan on riding along, please contact the senior person on duty to make sure it's OK (at least a day or two before the start of the tour). Another Candidate may have already requested the shift, and if we get more than one or two extra people, it is harder to find seats for you on the smaller rigs, and harder to account for everyone during more complex incidents. Also, we are all human. Sometimes the senior member just doesn't feel like having company.
3. If you are going to do a shift, overnight hours are from 2000-0600; weekend shifts are 0800-1400, and 1400-2000. Unless you make other arrangements, get there before the start time and help the crew with clean-up.
4. Arrive properly attired, clean shaven, etc.
5. If staying for an overnight shift, bring a sleeping bag or sheets with you, and ask the duty crew what bed is available.
6. Ensure your PPE is ready—inspect it to make sure it is complete.
7. These tours are an extension of your training; your purpose in being there is to learn. When not running calls, you can work on training requirements, familiarize yourself with the rigs, work out, find something to clean, etc. You can watch TV after you become a full member.
8. You are basically there as a guest—act like it.
9. Enjoy your shifts!

Certification Process

In the State of Texas, there are two recognized certification agencies, the Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP), and the State Firefighter's and Fire Marshals Association (SFFMA). Historically, most paid fire departments use the TCFP standards, while the volunteer departments use SFFMA. The WVFD uses both. The objectives for certification are similar for both agencies—they follow NFPA 1001.

TCFP. To be awarded TCFP-Basic certification, you must meet the requirements of Firefighter I and Firefighter II, as well as hold certification as an EMT or ECA. For more information on the TCFP, visit them on the web at www.tcfp.state.tx.us

SFFMA. The SFFMA has developed a list of 22 training categories, with specific objectives for each. Once the objectives for a particular level are met, you are eligible to test for that certification. For more information, click on the "certifications" tab at www.sffma.org

IFSAC. The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) does not provide training, but they do validate curriculum and testing. Certificates with an IFSAC seal are recognized by both TCFP and SFFMA.

Sign-In Sheet: At the beginning of each training session, a sign-in sheet is made available. It is very important you sign in (legibly). At the conclusion of each training session, the sign-in sheet is used to ensure each attendee gets credit for his or her attendance. Don't count on the instructor to remember you were there and give you credit—it's not going to happen. If a sign-in sheet is not distributed, or you can't find it, it is your responsibility to ask for it.

Getting the "Red Helmet": Candidates and non-certified firefighters are issued yellow helmets. A Basic Firefighter certificate from TCFP, or SFFMA Firefighter I certification will earn you the coveted red helmet.

Remember, as a probationary member, you will be judged by your actions, appearance, and attention to detail. At the end of your probationary period, the Officers and Chiefs will be discussing your progress and suitability for full membership with you. This is a busy department, and there is a lot of work that must be done. The satisfaction you get from being a member will vary, depending on how much of yourself you invest in it, but I am confident you will thoroughly enjoy your time here. If, however, you decide this isn't for you, or the time demands are too much, no problem—we will understand. Just let us know, so we don't wonder what happened to you. Again, welcome to the best profession in the world!

The Firefighter's Creed

Adapted from "A United States Coast Guardsman."

I am proud to be a firefighter.

I revere that long line of expert firefighters who by their devotion to duty and sacrifice of self, have made it possible for me to be a member of a service honored and respected, in good times and bad, throughout the world.

I never, by word or deed, will bring reproach upon the fair name of the fire service, nor permit others to do so unchallenged.

I will cheerfully and willingly obey all lawful orders.

I will always be on time to relieve, and shall endeavor to do more, rather than less, than my share.

I will always be at my station, alert and attending to my duties.

I shall, so far as I am able, bring to my seniors solutions, not problems.

I shall live joyously, but always with due regard for the rights and privileges of others.

I shall endeavor to be a model citizen in the community in which I live.

I shall sell my life dearly to my enemy fire but give it freely to rescue those in peril.

With God's help, I shall endeavor to be one of His noblest Works.

Firefighter Oath of Office

I (State your Name) do solemnly swear to do my duty as a Firefighter for the El Paso County Emergency Services District #2 to the best of my ability; to serve my commanding officers with respect and dignity; to serve the citizens of El Paso County with compassion, courage and integrity; and to uphold the laws and constitutions of the United States of America, the State of Texas, and the County of El Paso; so help me God.