

## General Information for Applicants/New Members

Thank you for your interest. Here is some general information about what membership consists of, what you can expect from us, what we expect from you, and what we will provide for you.

This is a volunteer Department, and all members serve without compensation. We hope that we will express our appreciation often, but we do not have the budget to pay. Your primary reward will be the satisfaction of being a part of the overall vision of the Fire Service "To Save Lives and Property", and of this Department's specific vision and mission, which are attached.

To be accepted into membership, each new person will complete an application, which will be reviewed by the Chief other officers of the Department, and then there will be an informal interview. After the interview, each candidate is invited meet with the Chief for a final interview, and if accepted, issued necessary equipment for the job. They are then invited to a general meeting and introduced to the membership. Once accepted a background check will be conducted to confirm the validity of their Kansas Operator's License, and confirm their criminal and traffic records information provided in the application. Falsification of any portion of the application is grounds for immediate revocation of any offer of membership.

Once accepted, each person will be provided with a dress uniform, two Department T-shirts, and full protective gear. The dress uniforms are primarily for formal occasions such as weddings, funerals, open houses, public presentations of fire safety, and so forth. The uniform should not be worn for non-Departmental activities, and when in uniform, or at any other time when identified (visually or otherwise) as a member of the Department, each member is to conduct him/herself with the utmost of professionalism, not engage in any illegal, immoral, unethical, or other activity that would discredit the Department, not use alcohol or illicit drugs, nor engage in use for personal gain, etc. The T-shirts and sweatshirt are the "work uniform" of the Department, and should be worn to calls, meetings, work activities, and so forth of the Department. They may also be worn off-duty to show one's pride, as long as they meet the same standards of conduct as the dress uniform. There are also optional embroidered polo shirts, and blue jump suits the member may purchase on his/her own, along with additional T-shirts, if desired. If the member wishes to engage in any activity that would not be allowed in the dress uniform, the T-shirt/sweat shirt, jump suit, or polos or any other item identifying him/her as a member must not be worn. Likewise, they should not be used during political activity when wearing such might give the impression, even if not intended, that the member is functioning on behalf of the Department.

Protective equipment is to be kept on the gear racks at the station. It is the member's responsibility to keep it clean, including laundering if it gets soiled. Washing facilities are provided at the station, or the equipment may be taken home and cleaned if soiled, as long as it is not contaminated with hazardous materials or body substances (other than the member's own). They should be washed in warm water with liquid detergent, not powdered soap, and ***never, ever*** bleached. Bleach destroys the protective properties and degrades the nomex fibers, and requires immediate disposal of protective equipment. Grass fire gear (helmet, jacket, pants, leather boots and gloves, HotShield, and nomex hood) should be worn to all wildland fires, and bunker gear (fire helmet, coat, pants, boots, fire gloves, nomex hood, PASS device) to any other fire, rescue, or hazardous materials call. No member is to show up at a fire without full protective equipment already donned. For EMS calls, (other than MVA's which require bunker gear) clean trousers and Department T-shirt, sweatshirt, or polo, or jump suit, or bunker or grass gear is acceptable, as long as clean, odor-free, and clearly identifiable as a member of the Department. Cut-offs, non-Departmental shirts, dirty

clothing, or anything bearing offensive inscriptions, alcohol ads, etc, should not be worn unless kept covered by bunker or grass fire gear.

New members start with a six month probationary/evaluation period. This allows them to learn about Department activities, learn the essentials of the job, and gives a chance for the Department to evaluate their commitment and abilities. During this time, each new member should plan to spend time at the station each week learning about equipment on the fire apparatus, watching the many training videos available at the station, reading fire service periodicals available, and so forth.

Videos and magazines may also be checked out and taken home for brief periods. They are particularly encouraged to spend time going through the equipment on the trucks, practicing donning their protective equipment (including breathing apparatus, *after* they are trained on it). During the first three months, the member does not need to concern himself/herself with operation of the vehicles. During this time the new member is also expected to attend every meeting or training activity, unless ill or excused in advance for circumstances beyond his/her control, and to respond to all calls appropriate for him/her unless at work or in school at the time of the call. At the end of the first three months, the member will meet with the Chief and/or another officer, and evaluate his/her progress. The next three months will become more serious in terms of training. During the probationary period, the new member will not drive any apparatus, and will not be used for any internal fire attacks or other particularly hazardous situations or those things requiring specific skills or experience, although they will be increasingly incorporated into key positions during training.

Training needed will be provided during regularly monthly training sessions, and from time to time special sessions will be offered as well. Currently, meetings and fire training are held the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., and EMS training is the fourth Weds. Officers and members of the Department are always eager to help, as well, so if a new member has time to learn, it is rarely difficult to find someone to come in and work with them, at almost any time of the day or night. There are also various fire schools from time to time, and when available various members will be sent to these as possible. One goal for each new member should be to obtain Firefighter One certification within one year of joining, and if possible, both First Responder (or EMT or above) and Firefighter Two within two years. The Department will either provide, or can assist with the cost of this training. Additionally, members should receive training in CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens, and Hazardous Materials Awareness Level within the first year if they do not already have it. These classes are offered several times throughout the year at no cost in this immediate area.

By the end of the probationary period, new members should know the basics of the job, and should have at least basic familiarity to be able to drive and pump the primary vehicles at the station the new member primarily responds with.

After successful completion of the six month probation, the member will be allowed to drive fire apparatus *IF* he/she has completed the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course. EVOC is a prerequisite to driving any equipment, even after probation has ended. In the past, members could also qualify for an emergency vehicle permit for the personal vehicles; however, new County regulations strictly limit this, and it is no longer available to the majority of FD personnel.

New members are encouraged to be involved, be curious, and be motivated. There is always work to be done, whether it be cleaning the floors, washing trucks, fuelling chain saws and generators, straightening up, studying, checking trucks, or other things. If in doubt, ask - there is always something to do. There is usually someone available in case of questions, and most often there is someone to come assist in case of questions or concerns. Asking is a sign of motivation that is

always welcome. Senior members want new members to be involved and to be successful, and will do all they can to help.

The six month probationary period can be as beneficial as the member chooses to make it. All are urged to take every opportunity to learn and to be involved.

Health information. Your application asks for some very specific health information. Your answers are kept confidential. The top part, about TB testing and immunizations is required information if you will run EMS calls in any capacity. If you do not have current information for this, the employee health department at Mercy Health Center will help you get current at no cost. In order Mercy to provide this service, we must complete a hospital volunteer application (about one page), which has no operational bearing on your membership or activities, but entitles you to the testing and vaccinations at no cost. The lower part of the health questionnaire is to aid in determining if you have any health issues that would require special accommodations or which may preclude you from safely functioning as a firefighter. Additional information will be needed once you are accepted to comply with federal regulations for anyone using a respirator, and those answers will be kept confidential from all on the Department, and only reviewed by the Occupational Medicine Department at Mercy to determine if you can safely work in a respirator. In addition, the Hepatitis B vaccine is available free of charge to any member, and you are highly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Once you are a member, you can go to the Pottawatomie County Health Department and they will provide it to you at no cost to you. Starting in the spring of 2004, the smallpox vaccine will also be available to emergency service personnel. Information on that is available at BTFD, and you are encouraged to discuss with your family and personal physician whether that is something you wish to receive.

We look forward to working with you, and hope it will be a rewarding experience for you!

## **Our Vision**

With pride in the past, and growing to meet the needs of the future, we will strive to provide the best possible emergency and preventative services to our community.

## **Our Mission**

We are committed to protecting life, property, and the environment in our community by providing community outreach and prevention, rapid and professional fire suppression, medical and rescue services, and response to related emergencies. Our mission is accomplished by professionally trained personnel, through teamwork and innovation, utilizing the personnel and resources provided by our community.



### ***Membership Benefits***

As a volunteer organization, we are unable to financially compensate members for their service, but that does not mean that service here is without benefit. There are a variety of tangible benefits that are provided for serving at BTFD. This brochure explains some of the major benefits.

#### **Training and Professional Development**

Training provided at BTFD is among the best of any volunteer FD in this area, and will include a variety of classes that offer nationally recognized or accredited certifications. Many of these will prove useful if a member moves to another volunteer department or chooses to pursue a full time fire service career, including state and national certification as a First Responder or EMT, Firefighter I and II, Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, National Wildfire Coordinating Group "Red Card" certification, and others.

#### **Tax Breaks and Incentives**

If you itemize income taxes, direct expenses of providing volunteer service to a qualifying organization (which we are) are deductible as charitable donations. This would generally include such things as purchasing uniforms or supplies, any training costs that are not covered by the Department, and others. The value of your time is priceless, though so it is not deductible. Consult any competent tax advisor for specific applications to your situation.

### **Insurance coverage**

There are several forms of insurance coverage provided to all members

#### **Worker's compensation**

Work comp pays for any injury incurred in the line of duty, including all necessary treatments. In case of a disabling injury that requires you to miss work, it pays a disability benefit equal to 60% of a pay scale based on 114% of the State-wide average pay for firefighters at your rank and position. Disability pay is normally tax free. There is also a work comp death benefit, but you are better off waiving that and accepting State and Federal benefits outlined below, if eligible.

#### **AD&D**

The Fire Department maintains an accidental death and disability policy on all members through the Firemen's

Relief Association. This policy provides up to a \$40,000 benefit for line-of-duty death or disability, and a weekly payment of up to \$300 (tax free) for injuries resulting in missed work.

### **Public Safety Officers' Benefit Act**

The PSOB act provides a Federal, one-time death benefit of one quarter million dollars (2003 – adjusts for inflation each year) to fire, rescue, EMS, and law enforcement personnel who die in the line of duty. There are specific requirements which must be met, and beneficiaries are set by legislation, but deaths in emergency operations nearly always qualify. Recent amendments also make it presumptive that deaths due to heart attack or stroke on duty or after calls are line-of-duty as well.

### **KSFFA**

The Department maintains a membership in the Kansas State Firefighters' Association, entitling members to the rights and privileges of membership in KSFFA, which include a \$100,000 death benefit for line-of-duty deaths of firefighters.

### **Movie Discounts**

Some Manhattan area movie theaters offer reduced admission fees to firefighters showing a valid FD ID card.

### **Uniforms and equipment**

BTFD will provide members with one dress uniform, two uniform T-shirts, and all of the protective equipment and tools needed to safely, effectively, and professionally do your job.

### **FRA**

The Firemen's Relief Association is technically a separate entity from BTFD, but consists of all members in good standing. The FRA system was established in Kansas nearly a century ago to provide disaster and disability relief to firefighters. A portion of all fire insurance premiums paid in Kansas go into the State FRA treasury, and are then disbursed annually to local FRA's. We maintain a bank account, which can be used for relief payments (within tightly defined statutory limitations) as well as some of the insurance benefits listed in this brochure.

### **Gym**

The firefighters, through their own fundraising efforts (not tax dollars) have provided an extensive array of exercise equipment which is available to all members and their immediate families

### **Pending Benefits**

We are currently evaluating improved accident and disability insurance programs to be paid by the FRA, which may include coverage for off-duty incidents as well as on-duty, and possibly even a pension program that would allow long term members who leave in good standing to be awarded an annuity that would be theirs upon retirement.