**Professional Volunteer**

**Firefighter**

**Recruitment Orientation Guide**



**POTSDAM**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

*This document has been created to familiarize prospective members with the*

*opportunities and benefits offered by joining the membership of the Potsdam Fire*

*Department.  This guide will briefly explain the minimum qualifications needed to*

*become a member and serves to explain the admission process.  We welcome your*

*application and feedback.*

Potsdam Fire Department

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* **Our Mission**

THE MISSION OF THE POTSDAM FIRE DEPARTMENT IS TO SERVE THE CITIZENS AND GUESTS OF

THE TOWN AND VILLAGE OF POTSDAM BY UTILIZING EDUCATION, TRAINING AND OTHER RESOURCES

AVAILABLE TO SAFELY PROTECT LIFE, PROPERTY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT FROM INCIDENTS

INVOLVING HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, FIRE, AND OTHER EMERGENCIES.

* **Our Core Values**

Service • Professionalism • Integrity • Respect • Constant Improvement • Trust • Community

Service and Involvement • Health • Safety • Teamwork • Leadership

* **Our Vision**

-To provide an acceptable level of emergency care and fire protection for the community

in times of need.

-To be a community oriented service provider while maintaining focus on our core

values.

-To treat our fellow citizens with the consideration and compassion they deserve in their

time of need.

-To be good neighbors throughout the local community.

-To encourage, educate, develop and promote our youth as our community’s most

valuable resource and asset.

-To treat our fellow members with respect, admiration and compassion for the

challenges they face in volunteering and in life.

-To appreciate our members for their dedication, recognize them for their contributions

and reward them for their achievements.

-To be fair and honest in our dealings with the town government and outside agencies.

-To be recognized as leaders in our industry and our community.

-To continually monitor our operations, administration and service delivery, recognize

our limitations and swiftly implement effective change when necessary.

* **Letter from the Department**

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a professional volunteer firefighter with the Potsdam Fire Department.  The position of firefighter is one of tremendous responsibility and individual dedication.  Being a firefighter demands a great deal from each individual, however becoming a firefighter is one of the most rewarding things you can do.

We have prepared this packet of material for you to review in anticipation of possible questions you may have.

Our department is held in the highest esteem by our community.  We are a progressive organization that maintains a high level of professionalism and expertise.  Becoming a part of our firefighting team carries with it not only great responsibility, but it also carries personal pride.  This department is very proud of the men and women who are part of the organization who are highly motivated and committed to improving and protecting our community.  We constantly strive to enhance, upgrade, and improve the level of fire protection and emergency services we provide.

We hope the information contained in this guide is helpful to you and your family.  Should you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact us, or feel free to stop by the firehouse.  If you would like to apply for membership, please complete the application at the end of this packet and return it to the firehouse.

Danielle Rose, Chief

Potsdam Fire Department

* **Why Volunteer?**

Ask any professional volunteer firefighter why they accept the challenges they do and they will tell you in their own words that they feel a need to help others and give back to their community.  As firefighters work to fulfill their need to help others, they also meet the ever‐ growing needs of their community.  When you join the fire service you are joining a profession steeped in tradition, a brotherhood dating back to the beginning of American History.  Today you can walk into any firehouse in the Country, tell them you are a firefighter and you instantly have this connection and shared sense of commitment to something greater than yourself.

Firefighting is very demanding of an individual.  Many hours of training are involved, requirements must be met and regulations and standards are to be upheld.  Our volunteer firefighters are not compensated in the traditional way for their efforts.  Compensation is only received for response to an incident.  There is no monetary bonus, or financial incentive to work harder.  However, there is a reward!  It comes from the pride the volunteer receives both individually and as part of a team.  It comes in the form of a friendly handshake from a grateful citizen or a smile of gratitude.  The child’s awe as they see the inside of a fire truck, getting to blow the siren or seeing the flashing red lights while talking to one of the firefighters. The smile from a neighbor, friend, or family member in your community who thanks you for being a part of a thriving, valuable and irreplaceable community organization.

Many like the feeling they get when they help people in their time of need and some feel it’s their obligation to serve the community.  Yet others just want to belong to the team.  Whatever motivates you to volunteer – everyone gains the self‐satisfaction of being at their best when others are dealing with what is often the worst that life has to offer.

Imagine having to prepare yourself to cope with situations that range from structure fires, hazardous material spills, motor vehicle crashes, and almost any other conceivable emergency.  This diversity is coupled with the fact that these skills may be needed at any time of the day or night, seven days a week, in any kind of weather, and very often under potentially stressful and emotional circumstances.  Yet these same factors contribute to our profession being so personally rewarding. The personal rewards and satisfaction received from what we do are often beyond description.

There is the sense of accomplishment when you control a structure fire or extend compassion for automobile crash victims, and there is fulfillment from teaching fire safety to children.

The bottom line in our business is measured by the loss of life, pain and suffering, and the property damage we have successfully prevented or reduced. Protecting Life, Property and the Environment are always our priority.

Volunteering in emergency services is one of the most important decisions you may make.  We hope that you give this decision the time and serious consideration it deserves, and decide to join our ranks.

Our human resources are our greatest assets and we want you to be a part of our team!

* **About Us**

Your neighbors, your friends and maybe even your relatives make up our Potsdam Fire Department team. We are teachers, students, farmers, businesspeople, nurses, police officers, carpenters, electricians, office workers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters.

We are people just like you – with families, jobs and active lifestyles who still find time to give back to our community.  The Potsdam Fire Department offers a friendly environment for you to discover your capabilities and make the most of your investment in volunteering.

The Potsdam Fire Department was originally organized in 1857 and operates three engines, one tanker, one aerial platform, one heavy rescue, and one light rescue utility truck out of a single station in the Village of Potsdam. The Village of Potsdam employs four fire drivers that provide around the clock coverage with one paid fire driver at the fire station. The paid fire driver immediately responds one village owned engine to the scene of the emergency within the village limits and is met on the scene by volunteer firefighters responding from their residences or places of employment. Additional fire apparatus is responded to the scene by volunteer firefighters as needed.

 We provide comprehensive firefighting, vehicle extrication, specialized rescue, fire prevention education, and various annual community events.

The Potsdam Fire Department is seeking volunteers to bolster its ranks in a diverse range of services to help us serve our community.

* **Emergency Incident Response**

Unlike a paid career fire department, we have no scheduled duty shifts. Our Department is on‐ call at all times – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To accommodate your busy and varying lifestyle, volunteers respond when they are available in the area of our protection.

The Potsdam Fire Department is dispatched through the Potsdam Fire Department or the St. Lawrence County 911 Center. Volunteers are alerted of calls via pagers and Active 911 (a page that goes to your cellphone).

Once dispatched, firefighters respond to the fire station, put on their protective clothing, staff the appropriate apparatus and respond to the incident. If you are unable to respond to the fire station as a result of your distance from the station, you may respond in your privately owned vehicle.

We respond to structure fires in commercial and residential buildings providing valuable life saving techniques and property conservation.  We respond to motor vehicle crashes providing disentanglement and patient extrication.  We respond to hazardous materials spills, leaks and releases under a Hazardous Material Operations level of training.  We also respond to other classifications of incidents including service calls for downed trees and power lines, commercial and residential automatic fire alarms, assistance during severe weather conditions, police assistance, search and rescue support, evacuations, and numerous other types of situations that require trained emergency responders.  The list is endless and constantly evolving!

* **Benefits of Membership – What’s in it for you?**

**-Quality Fire Training** – You provide the commitment and dedication, and we provide all of the training at no cost.  We offer local and in‐house training; State certified courses, Regional and National Fire Academy courses, and multiple seminars and conferences.

**-Recognition & Awards Program** – This program recognizes and awards our volunteers for their service and accomplishments.

**-Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – We protect our firefighters with PPE that meets or

exceeds National Standards.

**-Uniforms** – Look professional and show your Potsdam Fire Department pride in your Class A uniform. Also Tee-shirts are provided.

**-Social Event** – Members and their guest enjoy our annual recognition and awards night each year recognizing individual and department accomplishments.  This special evening is also our opportunity to say thank you to loved ones who support us throughout the year.

**-Peace of Mind** – We recognize that firefighting and providing emergency services in an inherently dangerous business.  That’s why we take extra measures to protect our volunteers.   St. Lawrence County provides workman’s compensation coverage to members if they are injured on the job, training or other scheduled department events.  We care about your health, safety and well‐being.  Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) and counseling is even available to help our volunteers deal with the emotional impact of the tragedies we’re unfortunately exposed to in our line of work.  This service is provided free‐of‐charge.  All new members are required to go through an OSHA compliant physical examination as part of the department’s respiratory protection program.

* **Expectations**

Although no previous experience or training is required, you need more than just a desire to help people.  You also need courage and dedication, assertiveness, and a willingness to learn new skills and face new challenges. You must also commit to continuing education.

Our service is one that calls on its members to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.  Our volunteers need to be team players, respecting each other’s role and contributions.  You need to be willing to work on‐call and to deal with occasional interruptions to your lifestyle, dropping what you’re doing at the ‘sound of the alarm’ to respond to the emergency needs of your fellow citizen.

* **Costs**

1. When you become a member of the Potsdam Fire Department you will sign the Historical By-Law Book. This is the same book that the original members signed when the fire department was first established in 1857.

2. Each member is assigned to a Company. The Potsdam Fire Department is compiled of four companies. Those companies are Hook & Ladder, Company 1, Company 2, Company 3. These companies all are assigned two trucks for truck checks each month and will compete against the other companies at our historical Run-to the River.

3. There are dues for missing monthly meetings and mandatory events. Missing a monthly meeting is subject to a .50cent fine and missing a mandatory fundraiser is a $5.00 fine.

* **Application Process**

You have taken the first step by expressing interest in becoming a professional volunteer firefighter and reviewing this information. The following steps will help guide you through the process needed to become a member of the Potsdam Fire Department (PFD).

1. Read the membership packet and complete the application.

Minimum Requirements for Membership Application:

* Have attained the age of seventeen (17)
* Legal resident of the United States of America
* Be subject to being certified by a physician as being physically fit to perform the duties of a firefighter.
* Have lived with the Potsdam Fire Department protection area for a minimum of a year
* Be subject to a background check, to include criminal and arson bacground.
* Valid New York Driver’s License

2. Submit your completed application to the Potsdam Fire Department along with a copy of your New York Driver’s License.

3. At the next regularly scheduled business meeting of the department we will ask you to present yourself to the Investigation Committee as a prospective member. At this meeting your name will be submitted to the department for consideration and documented in the meeting minutes. At this meeting you will be given the opportunity to tell the committee a little about yourself. You might consider telling them who you are, what prompted you to consider applying to the department, any experience you have, and any other pertinent information you believe may be helpful.

4. Following the meeting your application will be reviewed by the membership committee. They will check all references and complete a criminal background check.

5. Following a successful review of your application, the Membership Committee Chairperson will contact you and invite you to meet with the officers of the department.   During this meeting the officers will provide you with additional information about the organization, answer any questions you may have, discuss expectations and evaluate you for potential membership.

6. The final step in the interview process is you will be asked again to present yourself to the general membership at the next regular meeting of the department.  Again, this will be your opportunity to say something about yourself. Immediately following your comments you will be asked to leave the room while the members vote on your membership with the Potsdam Fire Department.

7. Following a majority vote of the membership, you can begin the next steps in the membership process.  If you do not receive a majority vote the chief officers will meet with you and discuss your options.

8. If the members vote to approve your probationary membership the following will take

place:

* Obtain a physical form and make an appointment with our doctor to have the physical done
* Make sure that paperwork makes it way to the Department Chief or Secretary
* You have to be approved by the Village of Potsdam
* Meet with the Department Secretary to obtain a set of our By-Laws and sign the book
* Assigned to your Fire Department Company and introduced you to your Company Officer.
* Complete the Potsdam Fire Department Membership Orientation Packet and return it to the Fire Chief
* Meet with the Department Steward and obtain turnout gear, uniform, and pager.

9. Fire Department Training Requirements:

Probationary Firefighters are required to complete the NY Fire Service Training Basic Firefighter Operations Program or Firefighter 1 with their first two years. The Firefighter‐I Program is approximately 200 hours in length.

Following completion of the Firefighter‐I Program, all firefighters must meet annual training requirements to maintain FF certification and to remain in compliance with the department training policy. A minimum of four department trainings must be obtained annually.

Annually complete all requirements of the Potsdam Fire Department Respiratory

Protection Program to include FIT Testing.

10. Regular Commitments (Time/Dates Subject To Change):

* Monthly Department Meeting ‐ 1st Monday of each month 7pm.
* Monthly Fire Department Training – 3rd Monday of each month 6:30pm.
* Fundraising – Annual Coin Cards, Christmas tree Fundraiser, Chicken Barbecue.

All Potsdam Fire Department members are expected to be involved with fundraising.

Thank you again for your interest in becoming a member of the Potsdam Fire Department!