



# Guide to Becoming a Volunteer Firefighter with Stafford Volunteer Fireman's Association (Company 2)

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# Stafford Volunteer Fire Department

## Engine/Truck Company 2

P.O. Box 127 \* Stafford, Virginia 22555-0127 \* (540) 658-5332

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Dear Prospective Firefighter:

As Chief of the Stafford Volunteer Fire Department, I am committed to providing the most effective and proficient fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to our community. I am also committed to continuing the tradition and reputation for excellence that previous Stafford Volunteers have earned.

You will find that being a volunteer member of our Company will bring personal rewards and satisfaction, raise self-esteem, and provide you with a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride for a job well done. It will also provide your community with a valuable service that has the potential to touch us all.



However, service as a member of our fire department requires a serious commitment. Your decision to join our Company should not be made hastily. This guide has been developed to provide the information you need to make an effective decision that is right for you and us.

Once you understand what's involved in being a volunteer, we hope that you are able to make the commitment we need. The service provided by our volunteers is truly valuable to the citizens, businesses, and visitors of our community. We hope that you are able to contribute to our community's public safety. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Shawn Dunstan  
Fire Chief

# Why Volunteer?

## *Firefighting is not for everyone – but Volunteering can be!*

The fire and rescue service is one of the most diverse and challenging vocations today. It is this diversity that attracts ordinary citizens to join our ranks.

Different people volunteer for different reasons. Action-oriented people enjoy the excitement and adrenaline rush that emergency services have to offer. Others see the volunteer fire service as an alternative to “boring work during the day” that allows them to “drive the fire truck at night”. Still others simply enjoy the reward of helping the citizens of the community. And there are some who simply just want to belong to a winning 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 to childbirth to hazardous chemical spills to heart attacks to tornado damage and any imaginable emergency in between. 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 weather, and very often under stressful and emotional circumstances. Yet these same factors contribute to our profession being so personally rewarding.



We realize that firefighting is not for everyone, but we believe volunteering can be. There is plenty of work to be done on or behind the scene- including running the business of delivering emergency services. Our operational members are on the front line providing emergency services as firefighters. Meanwhile, our administrative and auxiliary members help with things like fund raising, filing, recruitment, fire prevention, and public education.



The personal rewards and satisfaction received from what we do is often beyond description. There is the sense of accomplishment when you control a building fire, joy and elation when a child is born, compassion for accident victims, and fulfillment from teaching fire safety to a group of children.

The bottom line in our business is measured by the loss of life, pain and suffering, and the property damage we have prevented and reduced.

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 we hope that you decide to join our ranks as either an operational, administrative or auxiliary member. Whichever type of membership you decide upon, we have a volunteer opportunity for you!

## About Us



It's all about people. Fire engines don't put out fires, people do. Rescue tools never rescued anyone on their own- it takes people.

Our human resources are our greatest asset. And we WANT you to be part of our team. Our fire department team is comprised of your neighbors, friends, and maybe even family. They are all people just like you with families, jobs, and active lifestyles who still find time to give back to their community.

Our Company offers a friendly environment for you to discover your capabilities and make the most of your volunteering investment. The Stafford

Volunteer Fireman's Association, also known as the Stafford Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD), primarily covers the east central part of Stafford County to include much of the I-95 corridor. We provide comprehensive fire fighting, extrication, fire prevention education, and emergency medical services not only to our assigned area but also to the entire county and the neighboring counties of Fauquier and King George as well as the city of Fredericksburg under automatic mutual aid agreements.

The Stafford Volunteer Fire Department is located at 305 Jason Mooney Drive, near the Stafford County Courthouse. Having moved from our previous location at 2080 Jefferson Davis Highway in May 2009, we currently man Stafford Volunteer Fire and Rescue Departments Station Number 2 with volunteers 24 hours a day. We are one of the many fire departments that comprise the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department, which is a combination department with both career and volunteer members at stations throughout the county. Therefore, we frequently work with other volunteer and career firefighters and emergency medical technicians.



We take our emergency services very seriously. While individuals volunteer to serve their community, our volunteers must realize that this fire department provides services paid for by the taxpayers in our county. Despite being unpaid professionals, our volunteers must be committed to providing their time as much as they can.

Within our Company, we operate 2 Engines (apparatus with water and pumps), a Ladder Truck (apparatus with an aerial ladder), and a Brush Truck (smaller apparatus for brush fires).

We seek volunteers to bolster our ranks in a diverse range of services. We offer training in emergency medical services, emergency vehicle operator training, fire pump operation, fire fighting, hazardous materials response, technical rescue, and other specialized fields. Our duty crew schedules are somewhat flexible and you will find that our members are friendly and fun to be around but at the same time are very professional and take their job seriously.



## How We Respond

At Company 2 all of our members are volunteers. In the past, our members responded from home when called. However, today we staff the station 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with volunteers. Our engine is staffed close to 99% of the time while our ladder truck is staffed close to 90% of the time.



Emergency calls are made through 9-1-1 to the Stafford County Communications Center. Dispatchers then alert the needed fire and rescue companies through a computer aided dispatch (CAD) system as well as over two-way radio and pagers. Upon being dispatched, our volunteers at the station respond in the apparatus to the scene. SVFD no longer allows self-response or taking your personal vehicle to the scene of an emergency. However, during large incidents, members not currently at the station will be notified by text messaging or e-mail alerts when the need exists to staff additional apparatus. These members then take in other incident calls throughout the county.

We respond primarily to provide fire suppression and rescue service incidents throughout the county. Our engine company regularly responds to structure fires, car fires, brush fires and auto accidents to suppress fires, eliminate hazards, and extricate patients who are trapped in their vehicles. Meanwhile, our truck company regularly responds to structure fires and technical rescues. We also operate as first responders for emergency medical calls and at the operations level for hazardous materials spills. For extensive Haz-Mat incidents, we investigate the hazards within the limitations of our training but call qualified Haz-Mat Response Teams to perform the needed duties.





# Benefits

SVFD volunteers qualify for several benefits based on active participation in the department's activities. These benefits include:

- **TRAINING** - If you have the commitment, we will provide all the training you need for FREE. We also offer specialized courses and training opportunities for those who are interested and dedicated.
- **EQUIPMENT** - We protect our firefighters with the latest technology in fire resistive coats, pants, boots, gloves, hoods and traditional fire helmets. All of these are provided at no charge to you. We only ask you to take care of the equipment as if it were your own.
- **DEPARTMENT APPAREL** - Look professional and show your department pride by wearing your department T-Shirt. Other apparel is available at a reduced rate for your purchase.
- **NEW FIRE STATION** - As of May 7, 2009, we have moved into a new state of the art fire station with workout facilities, multiple computers with internet access, a large kitchen, a large meeting room, and two-person bedrooms with comfortable beds.
- **SOCIAL EVENTS** - We host several outings throughout the year such as our annual installation banquet, Family Christmas Dinner and Family Crab Feast. The Department as well as individual members also host cook-outs and other events for members and their families.
- **WEB SITE** - Our website, [www.stafford2fire.com](http://www.stafford2fire.com), has had over 78,000 visitors since it was upgraded in the summer of 2008. Our site has updated pictures and stories of calls as well as a Members Area with a complete document library for any item of interest within the Department. All members are provided a free email account.
- **PARKS AND RECREATION ACCESS** - All Stafford County Volunteers are able to gain FREE access to Parks and Recreation facilities.
- **EXTENDED STAFFING** - Volunteers may choose to sleep at the fire station in return for answering all calls for service while in quarters. You will be provided locker space and a bunk. Check <http://www.stafford2fire.com/content/exprogram> for further details (Perfect for College Students).
- **EDUCATION ASSISTANCE** - SVFD partners with Columbia Southern University for a 10% reduction in tuition for students. SVFD also offers several scholarships to active students.
- **PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR ONE VEHICLE** - Volunteers may have their personal property tax significantly reduced or eliminated on one privately owned vehicle.
- **LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARDS (LOSAP)** - Volunteers may receive up to \$250 per month upon reaching 65 years of age. The amount received depends on number of years of service.
- **LIFE INSURANCE** - LOSAP participants also qualify for a life insurance benefit.



# Expectations

“Through these doors pass Stafford’s best firefighters...” We believe this statement and work to make it true on a daily basis. We DO NOT expect you to have any experience, but we will work with you to provide you with the tools to become a great firefighter. You will need to start with a desire to help people and a desire to learn new skills and face new challenges. 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 able to give time at the fire station and to deal with occasional interruptions in your daily routine, dropping what you are doing at the *sound of the bell* to respond to the emergency needs of the community.

In order to make that happen, we do ask for a few things from you.

- Come Around. You will never gain experience without giving some time. We do not expect everyone to live at the firehouse, and we all need personal time. However, at a minimum we ask that you give one night a week from 6pm to 10:30pm (or equal time during the day). You are certainly welcome to be at the station more than this, but this is the bare minimum. We further encourage friends and family to visit as long as they do not interfere with our service to the community.

Each member, regardless of prior certification, will complete a probationary training program to acquaint you with the firefighting tactics, techniques and procedures we use at the SVFD. For new members with no experience, this will be done in conjunction with the certification training discussed in the next section. For members with firefighting experience, our training division will evaluate your prior certifications and determine what further training you require. As a general rule, if your fire training certification is from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, accredited by the Pro Board, or the International Fire Services Accreditation Congress, then it will be accepted.



- Attend Training. A basic orientation training program is offered once a quarter for new volunteer firefighters and EMTs. This will certify you in CPR, teach you about infectious control and hazardous materials awareness. Following these classes, the basic firefighting class is offered at least twice a year in Stafford County. It will teach you the essential skills you need to perform firefighting operations and certify you to fight fire within the Commonwealth of Virginia. While it is a challenge to attend class and spend time at the firehouse, we promise that we will prepare you to easily pass the state exam. All training is provided free of charge.



Once you are certified as a firefighter, the schooling does not end. We hope that you continue to take additional classes in areas that you are interested in (driver/operator, officer, instructor, technical rescue, wildland firefighting, or emergency medical services). The department will likely pay for many of these classes as well as your travel to and from the school, if you must go out of town.

- **Listen and Learn.** We have several members who are true experts in many areas of firefighting. They are happy to share their knowledge with you, but we do not have time to deal with argumentative, uncaring, or “know it all” people. The other part of this expectation is that you need to ask for knowledge or help. We will not force you to sit down and review skills.
- **Study.** The bare minimum time in class and at the station will not make you a good firefighter. You will have to put in additional time and effort. Most of this needs to be focused on the application of the basics. Specifically, how Company 2 operates, the capabilities and maintenance of gear, and the storage of that gear on the apparatus are critical to our success on an emergency incident.

## **The Next Step**

If all this interests you, you might have what it takes to join our ranks. The next step is to apply. The application is the same regardless of the type of membership you are applying for. Please be sure to indicate company 2 when asked which volunteer fire station you would like to belong to. Also, please indicate which type of member you would like to be, active or auxiliary. If you are under the age of 18, you will be referred to our junior program coordinator for further information.



All applications go through the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department for background and identification processing. Once approved by the County, active membership applications are presented to the membership at a Company Membership Meeting for 90-day probation. You will be introduced and your application read to the membership. They will vote on whether to offer you status as a probationary member. You are expected to attend this business meeting for new members that follows. They normally occur on the fourth Monday of every month starting at 1930 at the fire station. During the probationary period, we want you to get to know us and us to get to know you. After the business meeting, we will provide an orientation to company 2, give you a packet to begin your probationary training and a checklist to aid you in completing many of the tasks you'll need to do as a probationary member. We hope you are still interested in the Department at the end of this time, but many people find that this profession or our Department is not for them. At the end of the 90-day probationary period, your application will again be brought before the membership at a Company Meeting to for a permanent membership vote.

Auxiliary membership applications are sent to our auxiliary president for processing and then presented to the auxiliary membership at their monthly meeting. You will be introduced, your application read, and a vote taken on whether to offer you status as a member. Auxiliary applicants are expected to attend this meeting, which occurs on the fourth Thursday of every month at 1830 at the fire station.

Junior firefighter membership applications are sent to our junior firefighter program coordinator for processing. These applications are presented to the junior membership at their monthly meeting where they will vote on whether to offer you status as a member. You are expected to attend this meeting. They normally occur on the fourth Monday of every month at 1830 at the fire station.

## **TO APPLY:**

1. Visit our website [www.stafford2fire.com](http://www.stafford2fire.com) and select “Join the Team” menu. There you will find many useful links as well as the application that must be completed.
2. You must meet the following requirements:
  - Be 18 years of age (16 years of age for junior firefighters)
  - Either enrolled in High School or a High School Graduate (GED is acceptable)
  - Able to read and write the english language
  - If over 18, possess a drivers license which is valid in Virginia and an excellent driving record
  - Be in general good health (Operational Members Only)
3. Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department will schedule you to complete the following:
  - Fingerprinting (Operational and Auxiliary Members Only)
  - Background and criminal history record check (Operational and Auxiliary Members Only)
  - Physical exam and drug test (Operational Members Only)
  - Additional forms to include:
    - Release of your driving record
    - Accident and health beneficiary designation
    - Medical History
    - Parental consent (Junior Members Only)
  - Issue Stafford County Fire and Rescue Department ID card

## **Upon acceptance, all members (operational and auxiliary) are expected to:**

1. Attend at least one of every three regular monthly meetings and one fundraising event per year unless excused by the Fire Chief and/or President.
2. Participate in as many department activities as possible.

## **Additionally, operational members are expected to:**

1. Complete the courses that are part of the County orientation program, or show proof of completion, before responding to emergency incidents.
2. Complete a Firefighter I course within a year of being accepted into membership.

NOTE: Probationary firefighters will not be allowed to attend any other fire courses, besides the orientation training, prior to completing Firefighter I certification. Junior members must complete this course prior to riding any apparatus to emergency calls.

3. Maintain CPR for HealthCare Provider certification.
4. Provide at least 18 hours of operational service to the Department each month either by participating in training or by providing staffing for our apparatus.

**Note: Failure to meet the minimum requirements can result in termination of membership.**

## Contact Us

We hope you've found this guide informative. If, after reading this guide, you have additional questions that can't be answered by reviewing our website, then please feel free to contact us.

Questions about the application process can be directed to Stafford County Fire and Rescue Headquarters at 540-658-7200 or by emailing them at [info@staffordfirerescue.com](mailto:info@staffordfirerescue.com) or the SVFD membership committee at [bmangione@stafford2fire.com](mailto:bmangione@stafford2fire.com).

Questions regarding Company 2 can be directed to the SVFD Recruitment and Retention Committee by emailing us at [labbott@stafford2fire.com](mailto:labbott@stafford2fire.com), by calling the station at 540-658-5332 or by stopping by the station at 305 Jason Mooney Drive.



**See you at the fire station!**



**WWW.STAFFORD2FIRE.COM**