



**Bluffton Township Fire District  
Employee Policies and Procedures**

**EPP#:  
201.04**

**Subject: Firefighter Hiring Policy**

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**Effective Date:** October 01, 2000

**Date Revised:** October 05, 2010

**Category:** Administrative

### Purpose

To create a complete, thorough, and fair process for interviewing, testing, and hiring new employees for the Bluffton Township Fire District (BTFD). It is the policy of the BTFD to hire and promote the best-qualified individual(s) available. To this end, no person shall be refused employment, denied promotion or assignment, discharged or otherwise discriminated against or given preference in any aspect of the employment relationship on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, political affiliation, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or any other non-job related factor, except when certain physical and mental requirements are bona-fide occupational qualifications.

### Scope

This policy shall apply to all BTFD personnel assigned the responsibilities related to the hiring process and all applicants who wish to be considered for employment with the Bluffton Township Fire District.

### Procedure

#### **I. Hiring Committee**

- A. The Hiring Committee shall be composed of seven (7) members: three (3) Line Officers and four (4) Line Firefighters, under the direct supervision of the Battalion Chief of Training. All vacant positions are reported to the Battalion Chief of Training, who is responsible for referring applicants to the Hiring Committee for interview and screening.
- B. Hiring Committee members shall serve for a term of (4) four years. One-half the membership shall be appointed every (2) years at the beginning of a fiscal year. Any partial term served by a member shall be considered a full term.
  1. Committee members shall elect a Chairperson by simple majority during the first meeting of the fiscal year. The Chairperson shall serve for two years and shall be eligible for re-election to serve in that post for as long as he or she remains a member of the Committee.
  2. A member may be removed automatically by the Fire Chief for lack of participation, improper actions, or proof of any "conflict of interest" being demonstrated by a Committee Member.
- C. The fundamental goal of the Hiring Committee is to recruit and attract qualified individuals to serve as firefighters (in conjunction with the Recruitment and Retention Committee) and to make recommendations to the Fire Chief. Since the BTFD is a practicing equal opportunity



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employer, the Hiring Committee must ensure all applicants are treated fairly and equally with no unfair advantage being given to any one applicant or group of applicants.

## **II. Application Process**

- A. The Bluffton Township Fire District will place an advertisement for employment to recruit Firefighter candidates in national, as well as state and local, publications and on various websites. The published advertisement shall run on weekends, alternated as financially feasible. Advertisements for employment may be placed in other areas as deemed appropriate by the Fire District. These areas may include other classified websites and local, state, and federal government employment agencies.
- B. The Bluffton Township Fire District accepts applications January 1<sup>st</sup> through February 15<sup>th</sup> each year for the next hiring cycle.
1. Applications can be obtained at the Bluffton Township Fire District (357 Fording Island Rd., Bluffton, SC 29909) or via a portable document format (PDF) version printed from the Fire District's webpage at [www.blufftonfd.com](http://www.blufftonfd.com), using the "Employment" link on the home page.
    - a. All applications for employment are to be made to the attention of the Training Division.
    - b. Applicants must have reached their eighteenth (18) birthday to be considered for full time employment.
  2. Once the application is received by the department, applicants will be notified of application acceptance and given the location of the testing in writing at least two (2) weeks in advance prior to the process. They will also be given a deadline as to when they must contact the Training Division to set up a testing appointment time. The selection process will be held at least on an annual basis or when positions become available and the eligibility list has been exhausted.
    - a. Practical and written exams will be scheduled for the second full week of April, unless it interferes with a holiday. In such a case, the exams will be scheduled for the first full week of April.
    - b. Interviews will be scheduled for the third full week of May, unless it interferes with a holiday. In such a case, the exams will be scheduled for the first full week of June.

## **III. General Testing Information**

- A. Once in the hiring process, the applicant will remain active until he/she has either failed to successfully complete a section of the process, has been placed on the eligibility list, or withdrawn themselves from the process.



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1. If the applicant fails to successfully complete a section of the hiring process or is not hired from the eligibility list before the next hiring cycle, he or she will be required to resubmit another application for employment.
2. Applications are only valid for the testing cycle in which they were received. All candidate applications will remain on file for a period of one year.
3. If an applicant withdraws from testing, he/she will not be prohibited from testing the next hiring cycle.

- B.** Applicant testing will consist of a physical test first (known as the PACE test), a written test second, and an oral interview last.
1. In the event that the applicant is unsuccessful in passing the physical test, the applicant will not be allowed to continue in the testing process.
  2. In the event that the applicant is unsuccessful in passing the written test, the applicant will not be allowed to continue in the testing process.

- C.** Prior to testing, each candidate must complete a BTFD indemnification form. Each candidate must have a valid photo identification card and must provide this ID during testing and interviewing.

- D.** Any applicant arriving after the designated reporting time will not be admitted in the testing process and will be withdrawn from the remainder of the testing process.

- E.** If the applicant is unable to make the scheduled testing dates, he/she will be required to resubmit their application for the next hiring phase.

- F.** There are no make up dates due to weather. Testing will continue rain or shine.

- G.** Due to the lengthy testing process, applicants should be prepared to stay for any and all days that testing will occur as dictated by the Hiring Committee.

**IV. Physical Testing - *Personal Ability Course Evaluation (P.A.C.E.)***

- A.** To meet the minimum requirements of the Bluffton Fire District, all candidates need a combination of strength and endurance. The Bluffton Fire District has determined that any individual can successfully compete for the position of Firefighter Recruit if his or her preparation is focused on the physical abilities listed below. The PACE is a job-sampling task performance physical ability evaluation and consists of seven stations and is the result of a significant amount of research on the occupation of fire suppression. The tasks reasonably test



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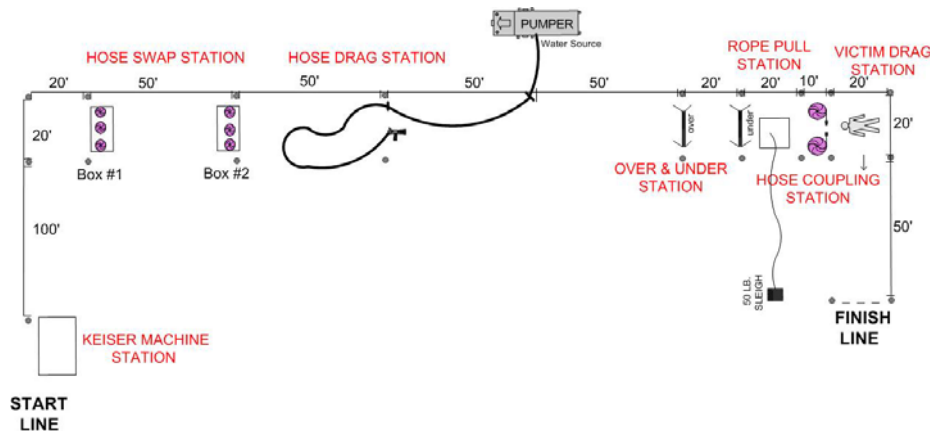
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the physical abilities of an individual as they apply to performing basic fire ground duties. No prior experience or knowledge as a Firefighter is required to successfully complete the PACE.

- B. Prior to beginning the PACE, candidates will be required to climb a 75' ladder that has been raised to a 70 degree angle. The candidate will wear provided safety equipment to include a fire helmet, fire gloves, and a safety belt with a rope line attached. The candidate will then proceed to climb the ladder. Once the candidate reaches the top, the candidate will be instructed to safely climb back down the ladder. This is not a timed event. Once the candidate successfully ascends and descends the ladder safely they will be allowed to move on to the PACE.
- C. The PACE is conducted with candidates wearing provided equipment including a fire helmet, fire gloves and a fifty pound weighted vest. The candidate shall successfully complete all the physical ability requirements listed below without stopping. The candidate will have six minutes to complete all of the stations in sequence. Endurance and completion of all stations is the goal. The participant shall not run. Running on the course is not allowed and will be declared as unsatisfactory. If during any portion of the PACE testing a failure in the equipment should occur, the test should be stopped immediately at the point of the failure. When possible, the failure should be corrected immediately and the application should be given the option to continue at the point of the failure or begin the entire course again. Any equipment failure should be notated on the applicant's testing records along with the outcome of the failure. Candidates will be monitored by at least one (1) member during the course. Cheering and coaching by members is not permitted.
- D. In the event that one or more of the stations is not fully completed within the six (6) minute allowable time frame, the candidate's attempt at the PACE will be declared as unsatisfactory and the candidate will not be allowed to continue further with the hiring process.

**PACE Diagram**





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1. **Station 1: Start- Keiser Machine:** The Keiser Machine will be positioned outside the starting line, facing the course. The candidate shall stand on the platform of the Keiser Machine with hammer in hand, in the ready position. All candidates must be in protective equipment before testing starts. If any protective equipment is lacking a hiring Committee member may eliminate the applicant. The test will start when the candidate strikes the sled. The sled shall not be pushed, pulled or otherwise moved except by striking with the provided weighted hammer. The candidate must strike the sled continuously until the sled reaches the finishing position which will indicate the station is complete. The candidate will now be allowed to proceed 100 feet to the next station.
2. **Station 2: Hose Swap:** Three (3) fifty (50) foot sections of three (3) inch hose, in a straight roll will be placed in a box that is ten (10) feet by five (5) feet in dimension. The box will be located at a set of cones which marks the entrance to the hose swap station. A second box with three (3) fifty (50) foot sections of three (3) inch hose will be located at a second set of cones which marks the end of the hose swap station. The distance between box #1 and box #2 is twenty five (25) feet. The candidate shall swap the hose in box #1 with the hose in box #2. At the conclusion of this station both boxes shall have three sections of hose in them. Once this is accomplished, the station will be declared complete and the candidate may then proceed to the next station.
3. **Station 3: Hose Drag:** The Candidate will drag one hundred (100) feet of charged one and three quarter inch hose (1.75") fifty (50) feet. The nozzle will be placed at the beginning of the station, facing the remaining course and adjacent to the first station coupling. The participant shall grasp the nozzle and drag the adjacent coupling past the water source mark fifty (50) feet. This is the only section of the testing where a candidate may run. When completed candidate will proceed to the next station.
4. **Station 4: Over and Under:** The Candidate will approach two (2) thirty two (32) inch high hurdles that will be spaced eight (8) feet apart. Candidate will go over the first hurdle and under the second hurdle. After completion candidate will proceed to the next station.
5. **Station 5: Rope Pull:** The Candidate will stand or sit in a five (5) foot by five (5) foot area marked on the testing field. The Candidate will then pull a rope attached to a weighted pull sled fifty (50) feet in to the box in which the participant is located. The Candidate will not leave the designated box until the weighted pull sled has entered the box and then told to advance to the next station by the testing attendant.
6. **Station 6: Hose Coupling:** Two (2) sections of three (3) inch hose will be placed side-by-side and the candidate must connect the hoses together by the couplings before proceeding to the next station. Once the testing attendant confirms the hose is fully coupled, the attendant will advise the applicant to proceed to the test station.
7. **Station 7: Victim Drag:** A rescue manikin weighing approximately one hundred sixty five (165) pounds will be placed ten (10) feet from the cones of the last station. The candidate



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will grasp and drag the manikin fifty (50) feet and pass through the last set of cones. Once the candidate and the manikin totally pass through the last set of cones the course will have been completed.

- V. **Written Testing:** A written comprehension exam is administered to each applicant. The written exam is purchased from a third party company which is nationally recognized and used for fire service testing. Written testing will consist of a two (2) and one-half (1/2) hour time limit that will be proctored by at least two individuals (1 Proctor per 25 candidates taking the exam) of the Bluffton Township Fire District. Once completed, the written tests are sent to an independent company who grades the exams. The grading company will send only a pass/fail result score to the Fire District. The written test will consist of two areas:
- A. **Problem Solving.** General mental or cognitive ability - Ability to effectively deal with routine or unusual situations that can present themselves on the job. Ability to anticipate situations and to generate alternate plans of action. This component measures the following job related abilities:
1. Verbal Comprehension - The ability to understand language, either written or spoken.
  2. Verbal Expression - The ability to use language to communicate information or ideas to other people.
  3. Problem Sensitivity - The ability to recognize or identify the existence of problems.
  4. Deductive Reasoning - The ability to apply general rules or regulations to specific cases or to proceed from stated principles to logical conclusions.
  5. Information Ordering - The ability to apply rules to a situation for the purpose of putting the information in the best or most appropriate sequence.
  6. Mathematical Reasoning - The ability to reason abstractly using quantitative concepts and symbols.
  7. Numeric Facility - The ability to manipulate numbers in numerical operations.
- B. **Firefighter Orientation:** Attitudes and personality characteristics which are necessary to effectively interact with both coworkers and the public. This component of the National Firefighter Selection Institute (NFSI) also includes questions measuring the following job related personality characteristics:
1. Stress Tolerance- The ability to deal with the on-the-job stressors of work as a firefighter.
  2. Team Orientation- The ability to function within the team dynamic of the firefighter position; the ability to work effectively with others.
  3. Motivation/Attitude- The ability and desire to carry out the duties of a firefighter to the best of ones ability; to strive to maintain a positive attitude about the job.



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## VI. Applicant Interviews

- A. Upon the applicant's successful completion of the physical agility test and the written portion of the application process, an interview with the applicant will be scheduled. The Hiring Committee members will conduct an oral in-person interview asking several pre-screened questions. The interview will last approximately (30) thirty minutes and will be video recorded.
- B. The oral interview allows Hiring Committee members to attain as much information as possible about the applicants in a question and answer format. The primary objective of the oral interview is for Hiring Committee members to witness the applicant's personality, demeanor, and other character traits that can only be gauged in person.
- C. At the interview, the applicant must furnish copies (or in some cases, sealed official originals) of:
  1. A current and valid Drivers License
  2. An official DMV Report from the state in which the applicant currently resides. No internet printouts accepted. Incomplete applications without all supporting documents will be held at the Departments Human Resources office until all remaining supporting material arrives. Candidates will not be eligible for employment until all documentation is received.
- D. Upon the completion of all suitable applicant interviews, the Hiring Committee members will create an eligibility list. The eligibility list will consist of all applicants who have successfully passed all phases of the hiring process. The list indicates eligibility only and is not ranked in any specific order. Upon compilation of the eligibility list, it will be sent to the Fire Chief for review and approval. Final selection from available applicants is the responsibility of the Fire Chief.
- E. Positions and/or vacancies will be selected from the eligibility list as needed. The eligibility list is valid for one year or hiring cycle, whichever occurs first. This may be amended as needed for staffing purposes. After confirmation of employment, appropriate enrollment forms will be presented to the prospective employee for signature. Additional criteria such as physical, drug test, background check, etc. may be required prior to starting employment. General orientation will be conducted as scheduled by the Training Chief, with job orientation to follow.
- F. Upon hiring, the candidate shall provide verification of employment eligibility in the State of South Carolina and the United States.