

PEACHAM VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
Peacham, Vermont

Personnel Policies

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! You are reading the personnel policies of the Peacham Volunteer Fire Department (PVFD). These policies were drafted with the intention that all members should know how the fire department operates and be aware of the benefits, expectations and responsibilities that come with the privilege of being a PVFD member.

If you have any questions regarding these personnel policies, please contact the Fire Chief or any other current member of the Executive Board. The Executive Officers are listed at PeachamFireDepartment.com. PVFD's personnel policies will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to remain current. The policies will be posted on the department's website and/or in a place accessible to all members.

For additional information about PVFD and its operation, please also refer to the Peacham Volunteer Fire Department's Organizational Statement, Bylaws, and Standard Operating Procedures.

GAINING MEMBERSHIP

Potential Members

Potential Members must complete an application prior to participating in any meeting or training session. An application can be acquired from the Fire Chief. Potential Junior Members (those aged 16 to 18, as per the Bylaws) require a parent or legal guardian's written permission, signature in the appropriate section of the application, and signed liability waiver. A background check is required of all applicants.

MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATIONS Peacham Vol. Fire Department

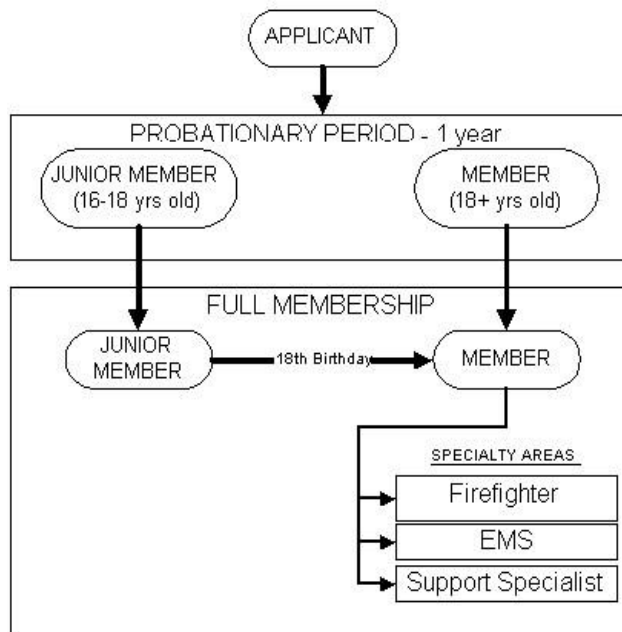


Figure 1. Gaining Membership

Probationary Members

Once a Potential Member’s application has been accepted, an applicant becomes a Probationary Member (or Probationary Junior Member if aged 16-18). All Probationary Members, whether Junior or not, will serve the same one-year probationary period as defined in the Bylaws. During this time, probationary members will be evaluated by the Executive Board for full membership.

As outlined in the Bylaws, upon completion of the probationary period the Fire Chief will decide whether the Probationary Member is to be removed from probation and declared a Member or Junior Member of the department, or if some further requirement must be met.

Junior Members (Ages 16-18)

Junior members do not need to declare a specialty skill area until they become Full Members. Instead, they are encouraged to experience a wide array of activities in all specialty skill areas. For safety reasons, however, Junior Members’ full participation is restricted during certain activities.

Junior Members **SHALL NOT**:

- Drive fire apparatus.

- Use Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) except during supervised training exercises and under the direct supervision of a trained firefighter.
- Enter structures involved in fire or the immediate perimeter of the involved area. *[Note – Junior Members may only enter a building that was on fire after the emergency is over and with approval by the Officer in Charge. Junior Members may participate in clean-up operations on scene, but their involvement should be limited to less dangerous operations i.e., hauling debris, rolling and packing hose, etc.]*
- Respond to or attend out of town (mutual aid) calls in a fire department vehicle, unless directed to do so by the Officer in Charge.
- Respond to or attend out of town (mutual aid) calls in their personal vehicle, unless directed to do so by the Officer in Charge.
- Climb ladders or work on a roof, except during supervised training exercises or at the specific direction of the Officer in Charge.
- Handle a live nozzle, except during training sessions or at the specific direction of the Officer in Charge.
- Use or install emergency red/white lights or sirens on their personal vehicle, nor receive approval of the Fire Chief to apply for a State of Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles Emergency Light and Siren Permit.

Full Members

Upon reaching their 18th birthday, a Junior Member in good standing will become a Full Member and the Fire Chief will help them choose one or more of three Specialty Skill Areas offered by PVFD in order to establish their individual training requirements. (See Appendix 1.)

Full Members, whether transitioning from a Junior Member status or entering the department as an adult, and after completing their probationary period, may serve in one or more of three areas of specialty:

- Firefighter
- Emergency Medical Service (EMS)
- Support Specialist

HEALTH

All members should inform the Fire Chief of any relevant changes in their medical condition as soon as known. The Fire Chief will inform the member if their change in health status will affect their ability to respond and explain any conditions that may be placed upon them.

BENEFITS

The fire department and the Town of Peacham will provide you with:

- Worker's compensation insurance.
- Liability insurance.
- Accident and sickness coverage for events occurring while on duty.
- Membership in the Vermont State Firefighter's Association which includes life insurance.
- Certain items of PVFD logo apparel provided by the department to identify members, such as:
 1. One baseball style hat AND one T-shirt at the time the member is voted into the department; and
 2. One sweatshirt at the end of the member's probationary period.
 3. Members may purchase additional items of apparel, as available.
- Hepatitis A and B and required vaccinations.
- A fire department uniform shoulder patch.
- Personal protective equipment as required to perform the various assigned tasks in the department.
- Paid training necessary to support the function of the department.
- PVFD's participation reward and incentive program.

If you have any questions about any of these benefits, please contact the Fire Chief.

TRAINING

Training is a vital component of PVFD membership. Not only is it one of the primary benefits of serving on the department, but it is crucial to our success responding to emergencies within our community.

Training and participation requirements for each Junior Member and Probationary member will be determined by the Fire Chief. Training and participation requirements for Full Members will be determined by the department's Fire Chief and/or the EMS Training Coordinator. All members should follow their identified and standardized training plans and, to the best of their ability, actively participate in weekly training drills and educational opportunities.

The Fire Chief and EMS Training Coordinator will review and decide upon member requests for individual and/or specialized training.

ATTENDANCE

A volunteer fire department depends upon the participation of every individual member. You should make every effort to attend every meeting, training, and emergency call. While we realize that 100% attendance is unlikely, the department encourages you to maintain a level of “Good Standing”. A definition of “Good Standing” and the benefits associated with such standing can be found in the Bylaws. A member who is struggling to maintain “Good Standing” will have an opportunity to discuss the situation with the Executive Board to determine if membership in PVFD is a good fit for them.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

The Secretary will maintain pertinent personnel records for each member. All personnel records and medical information are considered confidential by the department and are accessible only to the Executive Board. In certain circumstances information may also be shared with select line officers as needed to perform their supervisory duties.

PRIVACY

You may not discuss or reveal confidential department or any patient information to anyone, under any circumstances, except within the scope of your job duties. **Never share medical call details, including any patient information, with anyone in the public.**

Only the Fire Chief or their appointed member acting as Public Information Officer should provide responses to requests for information regarding fire or EMS calls. If you receive a request for information, please promptly inform the Fire Chief. As a guideline, information is deemed to be in the public domain when it is printed accurately in the newspaper, reported on the radio or television, or released on the department’s social media page by an officer of the department.

If you have any questions about what is confidential, please talk to the Fire Chief.

Critiques of calls should be carried out only in duly authorized sessions organized by the department.

INJURY

If you are injured while performing any PVFD duties, you must notify the Fire Chief or the Officer in Charge immediately. You must also complete an *Accident/Sickness Claim Report* and *Workers’ Compensation Telephone Reporting Worksheet* recording all pertinent and factual information about the incident. These forms must be completed for each work-related injury, whether you require medical attention or not. The reports are to be forwarded to the Fire

Chief within 48 hours of the incident. The Fire Chief will complete their portion of the forms and an internal *Personal Injury/Illness Investigation Report* and will place copies of documentation in your personnel file.

In the event of serious injury, an investigation may be initiated. A Workers' Compensation claim for an unreported injury will not be certified unless the injury requires immediate medical attention which was documented by the Fire Chief or Officer in Charge.

FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT

All equipment in the fire station, on fire apparatus, and issued to you for your use, is the property of the fire department. You are responsible for the condition and routine care of all equipment issued to you. You will be provided with access to gear, firefighting equipment, medical equipment, pagers and radios, keys and combinations, computer equipment, telephones, records, and more. You are responsible for the appropriate use of these items. Access to these items can be restricted by the Fire Chief, or in their absence the Deputy Chief, if necessary.

After an incident and training you should check and restock all supplies and equipment issued to you. If your issued equipment becomes damaged or is lost, you must notify the Fire Chief as soon as possible.

No one should place equipment out of service by means of removing equipment for personal use (borrowing equipment) without first receiving approval to do so from the Fire Chief, or in their absence the Deputy Chief. Medical equipment is under the direction of the EMS Training Coordinator.

If you place a piece of equipment out of service because it is not functioning properly or for any other reason, or if you find departmental equipment that is out of service, it is your responsibility to immediately tag/mark the equipment as “*Out of Service*” or “*OOS*” (with the current date) and to report the tagging to an officer. This will help identify equipment that should not be used until repaired, replaced, or placed back into service.

All issued fire department equipment and supplies must be returned to the department upon a member's resignation, request for inactive status, membership revocation, or when requested to do so by the Fire Chief.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

As a member, you are expected to always conduct yourself in such a manner as to convey a positive image of PVFD.

You are expected to exhibit and further develop personal characteristics of loyalty, respect, and competence.

Examples of this are:

- Loyalty to your fellow members, community and country.
- Respect for yourself, others, and the belongings of others.
- Competence by responding to emergency situations in a safe and effective manner in accordance with your level of training.

Whenever a member fails to follow an appropriate standard of conduct, measures must be taken to correct this situation and to prevent further occurrences.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

***Note** - The following is a statement of general guidelines concerning member discipline. The guidelines outlined below may be followed at the sole discretion of the Executive Board or may be modified depending on the circumstances and severity of the offense.*

Violations of Standard Operating Procedures will be corrected by a line officer or the Officer in Charge who witnessed or learned of the violation.

PVFD administers discipline through its Executive Board. The degree of discipline depends upon the seriousness of the offense and the circumstances under which the offense occurred.

Typically, minor offenses will be met with a “three-step” progressive model of corrective action as described below:

Minor Offenses

Step One - Verbal warning.

A Step One verbal warning may be issued by the Executive Board or by the Fire Chief, or Deputy Chief in their absence, without first consulting or further advising the Executive Board.

Step Two - Written warning with a copy retained in the member’s personnel file for one year, and verbal counseling.

A Step Two written warning may be issued by the Executive Board or by the Fire Chief without first consulting the Executive Board. Within seven (7) days of issuing a written warning, the Fire Chief must advise the Executive Board of all Step Two actions that have occurred.

Step Three – Emergency Suspension by the Fire Chief, or Deputy Chief in their absence, or member dismissal at the sole discretion of the Executive Board as defined in the Bylaws.

Certain major offenses warrant **immediate emergency suspension or member dismissal** as defined in the Bylaws. Please refer to the Bylaws for specifics regarding removal from membership.

Major Offenses

Some Examples:

- Possession of illegal drugs on department property or while on official duty as a member of the department.
- Use of alcohol in the firehouse, on fire department property, in emergency vehicles, at an emergency scene or at a training scene.
- Habitual absenteeism without an approved excuse.
- Committing any act of sexual harassment as defined below.
- Dishonesty or misrepresenting anything to the department or members of the Executive Board.
- Failure or refusal to carry out valid orders or instructions.
- Falsification of information requested on membership applications, department records or documents.
- Disorderly or immoral conduct while in department vehicles or on department premises.
- Reckless or negligent behavior that may or does result in damage to department property, the property of others, or injury to other persons, including unsafe response in a personal vehicle to an emergency call.
- Threatened or actual physical violence or abusive language to another member or member of the public.
- Unauthorized use or theft of department vehicles or equipment.
- Willful and repeated violation of established safety rules.
- Harassment of other members or residents including but not limited to verbal and physical conduct with regard to or on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, age, religion, marital status, or status as a handicapped person.
- An arrest and subsequent conviction of a member for an alleged wrongful or criminal activity.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

1. Submission to the conduct is either an explicit or implicit term or a condition of employment;

2. Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting the person who did the submitting or rejecting; or
3. The conduct interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

The department neither condones nor tolerates sexual harassment in the workplace, whether committed by supervisory or non-supervisory members. No one is permitted to imply or threaten that cooperation or refusal of sexual advances will have any effect on an individual's status, advancement, assignment, career development, compensation or any other condition of membership or appointment.

The responsibility for administering and complying with this policy has been delegated and communicated to all officers of the department. Officers will ensure that all members are aware of the policy against sexual harassment and that adequate procedures are in place to facilitate prompt reporting, investigation and remedial action. Any line or administrative officer who observes any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual harassment is responsible for taking prompt action to stop the behavior and then report it to the Executive Board.

Sexual Harassment Investigation Procedure

1. Whenever a member believes he/she is a victim of sexual harassment by another member or an officer, the following investigation procedure is to be followed:
 - a) A member who believes that he/she is a victim of sexual harassment may contact any officer to file a complaint. Officers are required to immediately notify the Executive Board who will order a thorough investigation.
 - b) If an officer or another member is the subject of a complaint, the Executive Board will conduct the investigation. If a member of the Executive Board is the subject of the complaint, the Selectboard of the Town of Peacham will be notified of the complaint for their handling of the investigation.
 - c) When the officer or other appropriate individual, as identified in paragraph b. above, is advised of alleged sexual harassment either on the basis of a written or verbal report, a thorough investigation of the situation will be made in the following manner:

- 1) The complaint will be documented either in writing or on audiotape. The report will include a factual description of the incident(s).
 - 2) If the investigator, after a discussion with the complainant and such witnesses as the investigator deems necessary, finds that the complaint is credible and the incident may constitute sexual harassment, the alleged offender will be required to meet with the Executive Board, be advised of the complaint(s) and be given an opportunity to respond.
 - 3) If, at the conclusion of that discussion the Executive Board has reason to believe the reported acts did occur, the member will be advised that such conduct is improper and in violation of federal and state law and that the member is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. A written memo with findings of the Executive Board will be filed in member's personnel file.
 - 4) If the Executive Board determines that the incident **did not** occur or **does not** constitute sexual harassment, a written memo with findings of the Executive Board will be filed in both the accuser and accused parties' personnel files for a minimum of three years after which time they will be removed.
2. Whenever a member believes they are a victim of sexual harassment by a member of the public, emergency services organization, or a vendor, the incident may be reported in the following manner:
- a) The member will notify any PVFD officer in the vicinity of the incident.
 - b) The officer will intervene in a manner they determine to be appropriate to alleviate the immediate situation.
 - c) The member will document the complaint and include a factual description of the incident.
 - d) The officer will document their action and submit it along with the members' written complaint to the Executive Board.
 - e) The Executive Board will determine if additional action is required.

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Expectations and Prohibited Activities

1. Members are expected to be in a condition to perform assigned duties free from the effects of alcohol and drugs. Members responding to calls are expected to be fit for duty upon reporting for assignment.
2. The department will not knowingly approve for membership an individual whose current use of alcohol would prevent him/her from performing the job or who would constitute a direct threat to the property or safety of himself/herself or others. The department will not knowingly approve for membership an individual who is currently using illegal drugs.
3. The use, sale, distribution, possession or manufacture of illegal drugs on the premises of the department, in any of its vehicles or by a member while on duty is prohibited. Illegal drugs include any mood-altering drugs or other controlled substances that have not been legally prescribed and/or dispensed, as well as alcohol or a legally prescribed drug when use is abused.
4. The use of alcohol or cannabis in the firehouse, on fire department property, in emergency vehicles, at an emergency scene, or at a training scene is prohibited.
5. Members are prohibited from being under the influence of alcohol, behavior altering legal prescription drugs or illegal drugs while on duty, during break periods and when a member is representing the department at meetings or in the community.
6. Both members and department owned equipment and containers under their control are subject to search and surveillance at all times while on department premises or while conducting department business, if the occasion warrants such measures.
7. Members should ask their doctor or pharmacist about possible effects of legally prescribed drugs. A member may continue to work, even though under the influence of a legal drug, if the member does not pose a threat to his or her own safety or the safety of co-workers and if the member's job performance is not significantly affected by the legal drug. Otherwise, the member may be required to take a leave of absence or comply with other appropriate action determined by the Fire Chief. Each member is required to notify the Fire Chief or EMS Training Coordinator about the use of any prescription drug prescribed by a physician when that physician advises the member that the use may alter the member's physical or emotional ability to perform his/her job safely.

8. The legal use of non-prescription drugs or herbal supplements is permitted on the job only if it does not impair a member's ability to perform the essential functions of the job and does not pose a direct threat to the safety of the member or others on the department.
9. Any information regarding legal drugs will be treated confidentially and records of legal drugs will be treated as medical records.

Definitions

1. "Drug(s)" includes mood-altering drugs and other controlled substances as defined by the State of Vermont. This broadly refers to all forms of narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, cocaine, crack, amphetamines, marijuana or other drugs or preparations that alter a person's physical or emotional state.
2. "Illegal drug use" includes the use of any mood-altering drugs or other controlled substances that have not been legally prescribed and/or dispensed, or the abusive use of alcohol or a legally prescribed drug.
3. "Under the influence" means that a member has alcohol or drugs in their system.
4. "Premises" refers to all locations in which work by fire department members is conducted, and all vehicles and equipment operated by and/or under the control of the department.
5. "Substance Abuse Program" or "Dependency Program" refers to qualified drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs certified by the state of Vermont.

Reasonable Suspicion Procedure

1. A member who suspects that another member is under the influence of drugs or alcohol should notify the Officer in Charge at the time.
 - a) If the Officer in Charge is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the member should immediately notify the Fire Chief. If not available, notify the next ranking PVFD officer, then the most senior PVFD member, or Officer of the Mutual Aid department on scene. That individual will be then designated as "Officer in Charge" for the purposes of this procedure.
 - b) If the Fire Chief is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the member should immediately notify the Chair of the Selectboard of the Town of Peacham. The Chair is then designated as "Officer in Charge" for the purposes of this procedure.
2. The Officer in Charge will observe the member and determine, through observation and questioning, if the member is ill, fatigued, under the influence of prescribed drugs, reacting to environmental substances such as smoke or fumes, or possibly under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol. The Officer

in Charge will record his/her observations and any information gathered from the member.

3. If the Officer in Charge determines that there is reason to believe the member is under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, he/she will remove the member from duty and contact the Fire Chief.
4. The Fire Chief may conduct a further investigation or require drug testing according to the laws of the State of Vermont.
5. Prior to testing, the member will be given a written statement documenting the specific objective facts leading to reasonable suspicion. The member will have the opportunity to read and understand the reasons for requiring a test and will have the opportunity to respond and/or provide a written statement. The member may be accompanied by another member during such an explanation.

Notice and Information

1. All members will be informed of the department's drug and alcohol policy.
2. All officers will receive training on the department's Drug Free Workplace policy.
3. Information about rehabilitation resources can be obtained through the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital.

APPENDIX 1 – JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The Fire Chief and the Executive Board will work with individual members to match their unique skills with the work that must be performed to support the department.

Firefighter

The department uses the Functional Position Description for Firefighter. A copy of the description is available for review.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Member

The department uses the Functional Position Description for Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) as determined by the Vermont Department of Health, Emergency Medical Services program. A copy of the description is available for review in the Vermont EMS Student Manual.

Firefighter / EMS Member

A Firefighter / EMS member should refer to both the Firefighter and the EMS member job descriptions listed above.

Support Specialists

A Support Specialist is a member who contributes to the department in ways other than fire suppression and patient care. Support Specialists may do building maintenance, fire prevention, fire education, and fundraising. They may be called to a fire or medical scene by the Fire Chief or Officer in Charge to assist on-scene. They may also be involved with calling members to respond to emergencies and logistical support at the fire station. Support Specialists may provide unique talents such as administration, record keeping, inventory and computer skills. Support Specialists are required to attend no less than 60% of all scheduled business meetings only to retain their membership.

RECORD OF CHANGES

July 2, 2001	Policy adopted
April 14, 2003	Adopted job description for Support Specialists
January 2, 2017	Changes to limitations for Junior Firefighters, Health, Benefits and Training sections.
December 1, 2023	General review and updating.