

Sample volunteer firefighter shift staffing policy

BACKGROUND:

Volunteer firefighters play a key role in providing fire protection services to the community. Safe emergency scene operations require adequate staffing at all times, and adequate staffing requires a significant pool of trained, qualified, and dedicated personnel available for immediate response. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) credits on-duty staffing at a higher rate than off-duty response, but only if the department has a written policy in place that defines work shifts, requires the scheduling and prior approval of staffing the shifts, and adequately documents the shifts worked.

PURPOSE:

To establish a daily volunteer tour-of-duty (shift) schedule for volunteer firefighters to work on specific fire department apparatus for an assigned shift in order to assist in providing for an effective, immediate response.

I. VOLUNTEER TOURS-OF-DUTY

- a. The department recognizes that a volunteer firefighter has many commitments to work, home, family, etc. and that the firefighter's time is limited. To provide as much flexibility as possible, the department hereby establishes a volunteer tour-of-duty (hereinafter called a shift) of a minimum of six (6) hours in length.
- b. There will be four (4) six-hour shifts in each 24-hour period at each fire station. The first shift will start at 0700 and end at 1300, the second shift will start at 1300 and end at 1900, the third shift will start at 1900 and end at 0100 the next day, and the fourth shift will start at 0100 and end at 0700. The department recognizes that there may be times when shifts go unstaffed because of a lack of volunteer availability.
- c. A volunteer firefighter may work multiple shifts in the same 24-hour period, and the shifts worked do not have to be consecutive. For example, a volunteer could work from 0700 to 1300, leave the station, and return to the station to work from 1900 to 0700 the next day, a volunteer could work four shifts in a row, etc. The department offers considerable flexibility in assigning shifts to allow the department to accommodate the volunteer's availability to work.
- d. Volunteer firefighters must schedule work shifts with the on-duty battalion chief in advance and receive approval to work the shift before reporting to duty.
- e. Volunteers desiring to work a shift must be trained and qualified for the position on the apparatus to which they are assigned.

- f. While working a shift, the volunteer firefighter will be under the direction and control of the company officer in charge of the apparatus to which he/she is assigned.
- g. If for an unforeseen reason the volunteer firefighter cannot complete the assigned shift, the on-duty battalion chief may release the firefighter from duty. The battalion chief shall document the portion of the shift that was worked and the reason the firefighter had to leave early.

II. DOCUMENTATION

The on-duty battalion chief is responsible for documenting the shifts worked by volunteer firefighters on the appropriate fire department form and in the station logbook. The on-duty battalion chief shall forward the documentation to the fire chief.