



Now That You're The Fire Chief

Your First Days

Congratulations on being selected as the leader of your department. Becoming the Chief of a fire and rescue agency is a huge responsibility. A responsibility that comes with both operational and administrative duties. Beyond responding to and commanding emergency calls, supervising personnel, keeping equipment in order and ready to respond, and handling daily tasks, there is the responsibility to ensure your department has met state and local administrative requirements. We have learned over the years that individuals ascending to the position of Chief have varying levels of administrative knowledge. Some are thrust into the position with little or no preparation, and there are those individuals that had an excellent briefing and tutelage from the previous Chief. In either situation, we believe this short list of responsibilities will be a benefit to all new Chiefs in the days immediately following their appointment. Don't be concerned if you don't understand these issues completely. Our office is only a phone call away.

First things first:

- This handout **is not intended** to be an exhaustive list of your requirements as Fire Chief. Other seasoned Chiefs are an excellent resource to learn from. Select a couple of mentors and put them on speed dial.
- **Never assume** that because the previous Chief did something a certain way it is correct. Always check the requirements, regulations, and their source. Things change and people make mistakes.
- Never be hesitant to **ask for help** if you have questions. There are several critical contacts included in this handout. Agencies that set and enforce requirements are also there to answer questions about those requirements.
- If you **need help, call our office**. As a member of our Association, we are your resource. If we can't help you, we'll direct you to the right place. Our phone number is 1-800-253-4733.
- **January** and **October** are both **critical reporting months**. If you were appointed or elected near these dates, immediate administrative action may be needed on your part. See the discussion below.

As Chief, here are critical administrative duties from a North Carolina state level perspective:

- PROVIDE NOTICE:** Notify the following agencies concerning your appointment by email or phone and provide them with your complete contact information.
 - The NC State Firefighter's Association (NCSFA) at 800-253-4733 or tim@ncsfa.com.
 - The NC Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) at 800-634-7854 or brian.newlin@ncdoi.gov.
 - The Fire and Rescue Pension (office at the Department of State Treasurer) at 877-627-3287 or NC.Fire&Rescue@nctreasurer.com.
 - The workers compensation provider for your department.
 - Your departments treasurer or accountant; your departments Relief Fund treasurer; your departments insurance carrier; banks and financial institutions with departmental accounts; County Fire Marshal or EM Director; City and/or County Government; and anyone else with whom your department does business.
- COMPLETE Chief 101 CLASS:** Your department is rated by the Commissioner of Insurance. A requirement to remain rated requires you to complete a Chief 101 course, provided by OSFM and the community college system, within a year of your appointment. This is an excellent educational opportunity for you to learn your duties. Schedule this course as soon as possible. These courses are often offered through your local community college, and available at area fire schools. There is a State listing of available classes at: http://www.ncdoi.com/OSFM/Fire_Rescue_Training/Documents/InstructorTrainingSchedule.pdf.
- SUBMIT ROSTERS:** As Fire Chief, you are responsible for the accuracy of the **NCSFA Fire Department Membership Roster** and ensuring that it is submitted correctly, on time, and kept current. Changes should be made as they occur during the year. Between December 1st and January 15th, the annual correction and certification period for rosters is open and required. Rosters must be certified and submitted **annually by midnight January 15th** of each year to the NCSFA. After the roster is submitted by the fire chief, the NCSFA forwards it to the State Treasurers Office. This credits your certified members for one year of service with the Fire and Rescue Pension program and membership in our association. At the same time, you have the option to select membership with the National Volunteer Fire Council. You can get your roster log-on credentials and instructions by calling our office at 800-253-4733. We will assist you with instructions to correct, certify, and submit your roster. If you miss the January 15th deadline, you could jeopardize benefits for your firefighters.

Your First Days Continued...

- PAY DUES:** Once your **Roster** is submitted by **January 15th**, you have until March 31st to pay your association dues. This ensures your firefighters are covered by insurance benefits the association offers such as Line-of-Duty Death Benefits, Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance, and Relief Fund Benefits.
- RESPOND TO MAIL TIMELY:** You will receive a quarterly “Turnaround Document” status report from the State Treasurers Office on Fire and Rescue Pension membership for your personnel. You are responsible for responding to the Treasurer’s Office with accurate information about any changes to your member’s pension or service records. Completion of the turnaround document should be done as soon as you receive it.
- KNOW YOUR RELIEF FUND BOARD:** As Fire Chief, you are an ex-officio, non-voting member, of your Local Relief Fund Board. Contact your Relief Fund Chairperson and Treasurer to make sure they know you are the new Chief. If you are unaware of who they are, our office can provide that information. You should be intricately involved in the activities of this Board and promote the appropriate use of the relief funds for your members.
- REQUIRED RELIEF FUND REPORTS:** Two relief fund reports are due each year. Your Relief Fund Treasurer must submit a relief fund financial report and supporting bank or financial statements to our association by **October 31st** of each year for the previous fiscal year ending June 30th. You, as Chief, must also submit a **Certificate of Eligibility for the Relief Fund (Report of Relief Fund Board of Trustees)** to the Department of Insurance by **October 31st** of each year. Failure to get these reports in correctly and on time will result in the loss of your relief fund monies for the following year.
- GRANT PAPERWORK:** If your department received a grant in the current year from the Department of Insurance or any other source, there may be reporting requirements that, if not met, could mean loss of the grant. If you are unsure of your departments grant status, you may contact the Department of Insurance Office of State Fire Marshal or other grant sources.
- KNOW YOUR FINANCIAL CONTROLS:** Try to obtain copies of the last several years General Fund budgets for your department. This will help you know where your money comes from and what expenditures may be due. Review any departmental contracts for requirements and any outstanding loans. Set up a meeting with your Treasurer or Accountant. Study your Charter, Bylaws, Policies, Standard Operating Guidelines, and operational procedures.
- KEEP FIRE REPORTS CURRENT:** Another key responsibility to remain a rated department is Fire Incident Reporting through the Office of State Fire Marshal. If you are unsure if your department is reporting, contact Kim Williams at 800-634-7854 or kim.williams@ncdoi.gov at the Office of State Fire Marshal.
- USE RESOURCES:** The NC State Firefighter’s Association, with the Office of State Fire Marshal and NC Association of Fire Chiefs, worked together to develop a “*Fire Service Reference Manual*”. It is available on-line through the Office of State Fire Marshal and the NC Association of Fire Chiefs. Try and acquire a copy of this manual as soon as possible. It is a much more detailed document concerning functioning as a Fire Chief.

We hope this short list of requirements was helpful to you as you begin your duties as Fire Chief. Remember that help from our office, or any of the sources listed in this document, is only a phone call away. We constantly monitor emails should you have questions after hours. Send an email to one of the following addresses:

tim@ncsfa.com Tim Bradley, Executive Director, North Carolina State Firefighter’s Association
ed@ncsfa.com Ed Brinson, Deputy Director, North Carolina State Firefighter’s Association