

Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Firefighter Program  
A Case Study of a Fire Rescue Agencies Approach to Volunteerism

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## **Executive Summary**

This report represents numerous hours of effort on the part of a small component of the operations team of Volusia County Fire Services (VCFS). Research for this report followed a structured process that was designed to improve the probability that all key areas involved with the volunteer program that should be addressed were identified and given consideration. Development of this report started with a review of the existing Volunteer Standard Operating Guidelines and Fire Services recruitment/retention goals for the fiscal year 2007/08. In addition, a brief review of the organizations history was completed in an effort to ensure readers understand the evolution of the organization, as it presently exists and how volunteers are currently utilized within Fire Services. An analysis of the Volunteer Manager's and the organizations philosophies, practices, and management of volunteers were identified in an effort to clarify the role of those involved with the overall management of Fire Services' volunteer stakeholders. The analysis naturally assisted with the success of identifying the significant events and trends that have impacted the Fire Services Volunteer Firefighter Program currently and potentially into the future. The findings of the analysis which focused on the volunteer programs structure, recruitment, training, and retention processes allowed an objective evaluation of the organizations volunteer structure, its resources, and the services presently provided by the organization to be conducted. It was found that considerable attention was needed in the areas addressing policies to provide volunteer members with specific direction. From the volunteer program analysis an effort was made to identify how Fire Services currently recruits and retains its volunteer members for the organization. The strengths which were found in the areas of recruitment, such as the large amount of public support Fire Services has within the community is one of the aspects, the Volunteer Manager wanted to build on in the future.

However, some of the weaknesses related to the departments required administrative functions necessary to recruit volunteers, were highlighted and recommendations were offered as ways to improve and/or minimize any negative impacts of those weaknesses. One of the weaknesses with Fire Services Volunteer Recruitment centered on the use of specific job descriptions for prospective applicants to review, along with the development of a Volunteer Recruitment Team. As well as, a considerable amount of attention was directed at the development of a process for retention, in the form of a Volunteer Exit Interview. In addition, to the administrative requirements the volunteer program's risk management concerns were identified. This was done so the organization would recognize opportunities for improvement and could address any concerns to not only protect its valuable volunteer assets, but to also determine what organizational changes might be needed to meet the challenges VCFS has with one of its most valued resources and be proactive by protecting the agency from any potential liabilities. A particular area of concern for potential liability for Volusia County Government was addressed and a formidable approach to resolving the liability was developed for Fire Services. Finally, a conclusion, which captured all the specific details of the report, is provided. One of the biggest findings of this report overall is the optimistic look for the future of the volunteer program. Fire Services Managers are dependent on the development of new and innovative ways of managing volunteer managers. This report provided some succinct recommendations, such as, specific assignments for volunteer members, a definitive volunteer incentive plan, new volunteer job descriptions, creation of a volunteer recruitment team, veteran employee mentorship, an exit interview process, verifiable training procedures, and a volunteer employee handbook. Each of the above mentioned recommendations will assist both Fire Services and the Volunteer Manager with meeting the needs of the volunteer program as well as the community they serve.

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## **Introduction**

Volusia County Fire Services has been experiencing a downward trend in the number of volunteers the organization has retained and recruited for well over two years. Many of the department's managers have attributed the decline in volunteers to: the training requirements imposed on the volunteer members, lack of true accountability for the volunteer members, and the associated economic challenges many nonprofit organization are facing. However, since the early part of this year the threat of tax reform has been a subtle reminder that the value of having a volunteer force is insurmountable. Fire Services has taken a new approach to the improvement of the volunteer recruitment and management program over the last couple of years. One of the biggest changes has been the institution of a full time Volunteer Manager, who is literally in-charge of all of Fire Services' active volunteer members. While this may not seem like a monumental challenge, the role of a Volunteer Manager is a very important and highly responsible appointment.

### **Report Preface**

This report is an overview of each of the components of Fire Services' Volunteer Program. The information contained within this document provides a glimpse of the requirements to manage, recruit, select, train, retain and safely care for members of the Department of Fire Services. The results of the in-depth evaluation required for this report also allowed the author to review various periodicals and scholarly journals to contrast some of the current practices in place to address the management of change within a volunteer fire service. Based on the findings of the research conducted on Fire Services' current volunteer program, a few recommendations have been offered to try and assist both Fire Services and the Volunteer Manager with improving the management of one of the department's most valued assets and one of the communities most prized resources, the volunteer firefighter.

### **History of the Organization and the Volunteer Program**

Volusia County Fire Services has been in existence for well over twenty years. The department is a division of Volusia County Government's, Department of Public Protection. As a public safety agency one of the primary responsibilities of Fire Services is providing fire and rescue services to the visitors and citizens of Volusia County. Unfortunately numerous individuals are impacted during emergencies resulting from accidents, illnesses, losses of property or life on a daily basis within Volusia County. Fire Services through the use of its force of 260 personnel and 24 strategically located fire stations provides fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to a population of 443,343 residents and visitors throughout the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Volusia County, Florida. Of the 260 personnel that provide fire and EMS services, 60 of these personnel are volunteers. These 60 volunteer members allow Fire Services' to augment its existing career staffing, by providing additional resources in the form of manpower, which may be needed on larger scale emergencies. In sum, Volusia County Fire Services' volunteer program is a reserve force of firefighters comprised of qualified personnel able to assist Fire Services' career members if the need arises, through the use of a combination (volunteer and career) fire and EMS department.

Originally Volusia County Fire Services was not a combination system; in the 1950's fire protection and EMS were provided entirely by volunteer fire departments throughout the unincorporated areas of Volusia County, Florida. While the use of volunteers to provide fire and EMS services may seem odd, the reality is volunteer fire departments have been utilized throughout the United States for years. In fact, in some small rural areas volunteer fire departments are still the only resources available for providing fire protection and Emergency Medical Services even today. Incidentally, it was through the use of a volunteer system that fire

protection and EMS was provided to many of the residents and visitors to unincorporated Volusia County for well over thirty years. In fact, in 1952, the small unincorporated area of DeBary created the first volunteer fire department to serve in Volusia County. Even today DeBary still has one of the largest contingents of volunteer firefighters in Volusia County at Fire Services Station 33.

Moving forward away from the 1950's two decades into the early 1970's, the State of Florida established a set of "minimum standards" of firefighting training required for career firefighters. These standards required that all career firefighters meet a specific level of firefighting proficiency. Eventually these professional standards became a turning point for the fire service in Florida and volunteer fire departments within Volusia County began to falter and lose their functionality. Very shortly after the State of Florida's adoption of the Firefighter Training Standards many of the municipalities in Volusia County organized paid professional departments which began to appear in the late 1970's. In fact, many of the larger municipalities began staffing their departments with full time firefighters; however, the unincorporated areas of Volusia County still relied heavily on volunteer firefighters. Up until 1986, volunteer firefighters in Volusia County were able to meet the needs of the citizens; however, that same year was when Fire Services began to experience a downward trend in the availability of volunteers to meet the unincorporated communities emergency response needs.

To overcome this, the inclusion of certified career firefighters were implemented into Fire Services to augment the volunteer firefighting force utilizing a 45 hour work week on a traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. work schedule. The 8-5 work schedule allowed Fire Services to provide coverage to the unincorporated areas of Volusia County, while the volunteers were at work. In addition, this work schedule allowed many volunteer members time away from the



department to meet the day-to-day needs of their families and try to live a normal lifestyle.

Unfortunately, during this time it was also becoming harder and harder for area employers to allow volunteer firefighters to leave their jobs during the day to respond to fires or emergency medical calls within their communities. So slowly but surely personnel staffing began to change within Fire Services. By 1986 there were 323 volunteers and 25 career personnel within Volusia County Fire Services, in 1988, Fire Services had 473 volunteer and 54 career personnel within its ranks and in 1997, the department began its full transition towards a career-based organization with volunteers supplementing the career staff on emergency response calls. Today, Volusia County Fire Services has over 211 career employees, and is augmented by 60 volunteer employees.

### **Organizational Structure**

Organizational structure is considered one of the most important aspects of incorporating volunteer members into both nonprofit and public organizations. Development and preparation of an organization's strategic direction, program goals and objectives, personnel requirements, and integration of an entirely new internal infrastructure is no easy feat, and has to be coordinated distinctly, to the point that the organization and its staff are assured sustainability (Brudney, 1999). A review of scholarly journals, along with the use of a recognized nonprofit management textbook, written with regard to the establishment and composition of a volunteer organization recommended that: ascertaining the expectations of volunteer members, having managers develop goals that are commensurate with the strategic direction of an organization, and the overall improvement of a organizational system which supports the participation of volunteer members can prepare organizations for the effective utilization of the spirit of volunteerism (Shin & Kliener, 2003; Brudney, 1999).

### VCFS Organizational Structure

Volusia County Fire Services utilizes its 60 volunteer firefighters within a “combination fire department” setting to provide emergency and non-emergency services to both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Volusia County. For those readers of this report not familiar with volunteer firefighters they are “basically unpaid individuals who are legally enrolled under the fire department organizational laws and ordinances and while they are unpaid; they still devote their time and energy to community fire service.” (International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], 1984, p. 87). In fact, with the assistance of Volusia County’s dedicated volunteer system, fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are provided in the unincorporated areas of Volusia County, Florida by a core group of volunteer members whose job classifications are comprised of Volunteer Firefighters, Volunteer Driver/Engineers, and EMS Rescue volunteers, each of which are a dedicated corps of Fire Services’ fire and rescue team. All of these classifications are an effective component of the County’s fire-rescue force; in fact, the volunteer program allows Fire Services to maintain its quality level of emergency service and provide it to the citizens and visitors of Volusia County, Florida twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Amazingly many volunteer members within Fire Services have been active volunteer firefighters for well over twenty years and have continued to serve their communities for many different reasons; however, many of the members have simply chosen to serve the public to give something back to their communities and respond to the challenges of someone in need of help. Today many of the County’s original volunteer firefighters have overwhelmingly continued to provide assistance within their community, “for mainly the same altruistic reasons year after year – because someone asked them to help, or as a way to reciprocate for the help they have received

in the past, and because their friends or family are volunteering or have benefited from previous volunteer services” (Wisner, Stringfellow, Youngdahl, & Parker, 2005, p. 4).

Aside from responding to emergency and non-emergency calls volunteer members of Volusia County Fire Services also provide assistance to the communities they serve through a number of special services. An example of one of those services is provided by a dedicated group of volunteers which are assigned to the Fire Prevention Team. This team assists in the distribution of fire prevention materials at community events and within the public school system. With only two full-time inspectors within the division, the volunteer members have been a tremendous asset to the organization during events such as Fire Prevention Week. Interestingly enough it has been found, especially with groups of volunteers that just as employees’ volunteers’ loyalty to an organization increase over time and overall volunteers tend to be more committed to the services their organizations provide (Wisner, et al., 2005).

The strategic direction of Fire Services is focused on being responsible for the protection of life, property, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) throughout Volusia County, Florida. The department provides a full range of services to the citizens of the community by utilizing a combination (volunteer and career) workforce approach to emergency services. The organizational structure of the department is comprised of an administrative head of Volusia County Fire Services which is the Fire Chief. From the Fire Chief down the department is divided into four divisions: Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Finance. The Operations Division is commanded by the Deputy Fire Chief (DFC) of Operations which commands all units in the field. The field units mainly consist of engine and squad companies that have both volunteer and career personnel strategically located throughout the county’s twenty-four fire stations. Volunteer firefighters, driver engineers, and EMS rescue personnel function as

fundamental parts of Fire Services' operational division and are commanded by a career volunteer manager assigned to the Operations Division.

For all intents and purposes the organizational structure of Volusia County Fire Services volunteer system is based upon the functionality or unitary type of volunteer management. Each of the volunteer classifications has specific responsibilities (Table 1.) which requires in depth training before an individual can function as a member assigned to the Operations Division of the department; however, there is a chain of command that is scalar in nature which allows volunteers to become empowered to truly support changes to policies, practices, and structures within their organization through their Volunteer Manager.

**Table 1. Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Firefighter Classifications**  
Volunteer Classifications and Job Descriptions

Volunteer Firefighter	Driver Engineer	EMS Rescue
<i>Role: Firefighter volunteers respond to all types of emergencies and participate in the extinguishment of all fires.</i>	<i>Role: Driver/Engineer volunteers drive fire apparatus to and from fire and accident scenes. Members are responsible for the operation of apparatus pumps.</i>	<i>Role: EMS/Rescue volunteers render emergency medical aid at fire and accident scenes and assist the sick and injured, and assure medical supply levels are maintained.</i>

Source: VCFS 2007.

#### Volunteer Manager's Organizational Position

Fire Services' full-time Volunteer Manager (Figure. 1) is assigned the daunting task of providing direction and oversight to all volunteer members, as well as, overall accountability for the volunteer program. The Volunteer Manager manages all aspects of volunteer recruitment, retention, training, and the management of volunteer staff within Fire Services and reports his progress in each of these areas directly to the Deputy Chief of Operations. Having the volunteer

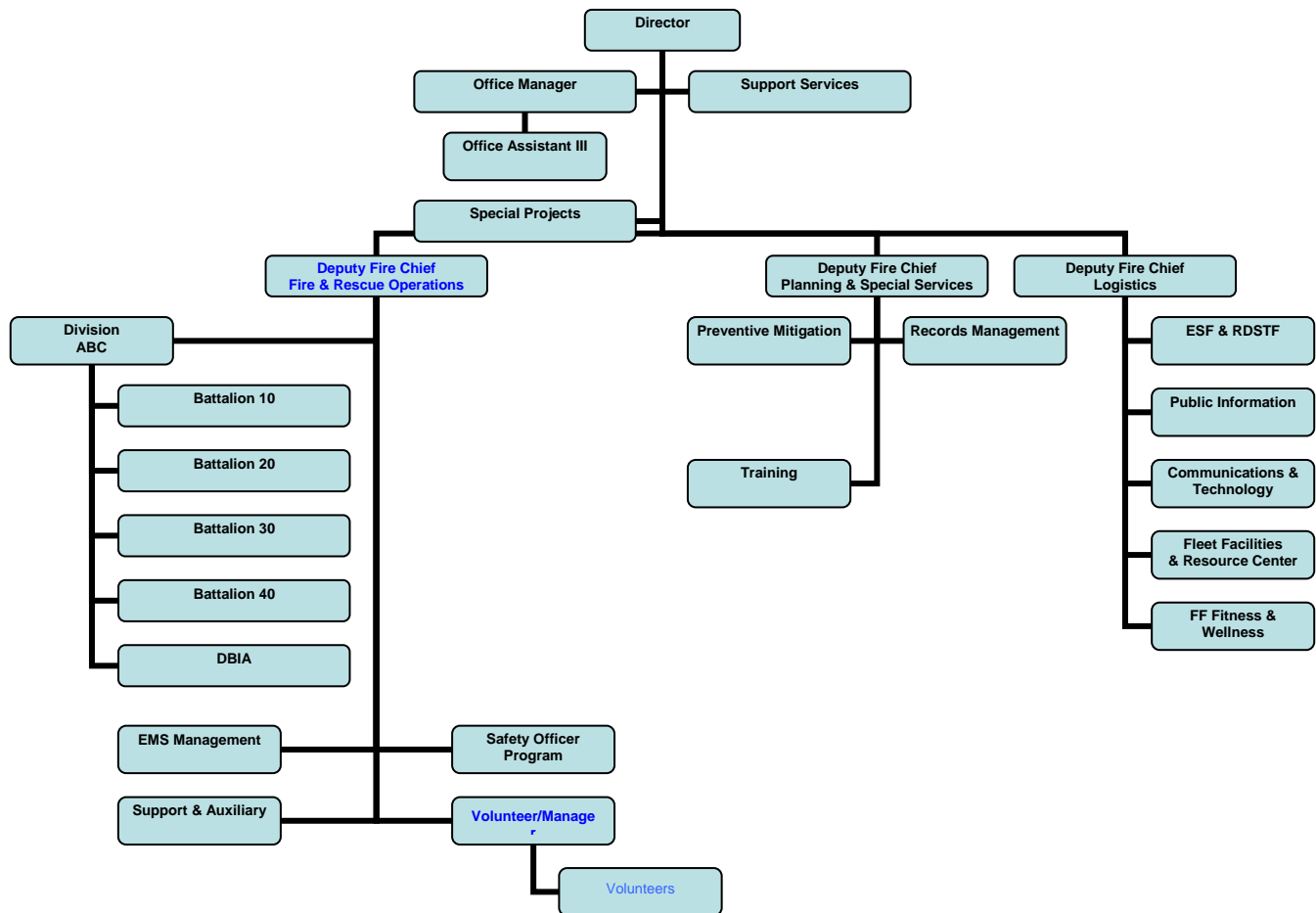


Figure 1. Fire Services Organizational Chart. Source: VCFS 2007

manager report directly to the Deputy Chief of Operations allows the volunteers to be well represented through the chain of command, which Brudney (1999) referred to as being pertinent to accounting for the volunteer members by supporting their wellbeing, and aiding in the effort to ensure that officials appreciate their worth and assistance provided to an organization.

### Volunteer Managers Role in the Organization

The volunteer manager's primary duty is to serve as a bridge: for salaried personnel and volunteers to recognize and maintain assistance for each other; for the community and the agency to assist and serve each other; for volunteers and those who are being assisted to unite with each other; and for any person or situation that may arise in which information, consideration, impartiality, and wittiness are required to help ensure a pleasant air of teamwork is

present on all levels of an organization (Stepputat, 1999). Within Fire Services the volunteer manager's role has evolved into a highly recognized position, which is accountable for each of the duties outlined by Stepputat (1999) such as, the responsibility and accountability of all volunteer members and the assurance that all volunteer members have met all of their training requirements before they are deployed into the field setting. In effect, it is through the Volunteer Manager's position that the link between training and the organizations mission and goals are accomplished.

#### Volunteer Management Process

To assure compliance in accordance with the department's overall mission the Fire Services Volunteer Manager helps to create an atmosphere of trust between the career staff and volunteer members. By building trust within the organization and advocating on behalf of the volunteer members, the Volunteer Manager is able to assure that the required training for volunteers is conducted and makes certain that each of the volunteer members are adequately prepared to work in the field setting before being released to the Operations Division. Jamison (2003) indicated that to assure that volunteers meet the needs of an organization, "volunteer administrators would do well to develop (a) a structure in which adequate training programs (pre-service and in-service) achieve the dual purposes of improving volunteers' abilities to do their tasks and conveying an understanding and commitment to the agencies' mission and (b) at the same time provide volunteer members of an organization assignments that combine routine work with challenging situations." (p. 129).

The reality for Fire Services Volunteer Manager is that in emergency services "each fire department has its own standard operating procedures that involve the everyday performance of fire department business and involve such things as personnel, time, and schedules" (IFSTA,

1984, p. 86) and a result, the Volunteer Managers oversight of volunteers within Volusia County Fire Services is dictated by formal organizational requirements of which some of the common examples of procedures required for the management of volunteers within Volusia County Fire Services are:

- Scheduling of Volunteer Firefighters for training drills;
- Maintaining drill reimbursement accountability;
- Assuring volunteer members obtain their required medical physicals annually;
- Recruitment and retention of volunteer members; and,
- Training and instruction of volunteer members.

In addition to the duties listed above the Fire Services Volunteer Manager is responsible for the development of all Volunteer Standard Operating Procedures for each of the three volunteer classifications. According to Commander Mark Edgil (Personal Communication, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007) this is one of the most important aspects of his job as Fire Services Volunteer Manager because the policies and procedures he develops provides direction for both volunteer and staff members of the organization. In contrast to Commander Edgil's statement, Stepputat (1999) referred to the process of implementing volunteer policies, "as a need for requiring someone to address the concerns of (1) respect and understanding for the role of volunteers within the organization and how those roles interact with all other departments, and (2) the attitude that volunteers are human resources for an organization and require the same level of management as do paid employees." (p.161). Within Fire Services, the Volunteer Manager has assumed this authority and constantly assures that each of the policies and procedures adopted by Fire Services are applicable to both career and volunteer personnel by design; however, some policies are given to the Volunteer Manager for specific review before implementation.

Unfortunately policy review puts the Volunteer Manager in charge of identifying the guiding principle issues for all the departments staff and assuring they will be commensurate with the volunteer ranks and if not, the Volunteer Manager is tasked with also bringing those to the attention of senior staff and administrators for reconciliation (Graff, 1995).

### Recommendations for Program Management

**Recommendation 1** – The integration of new volunteers into Fire Services is primarily contingent on the departments training program. The “Volunteer Academy” as it is known within Volusia County Fire Services is a very integral part of indoctrinating and developing prospective volunteer members. To date the number of volunteer members within the organization is declining as shown in Figure 2.

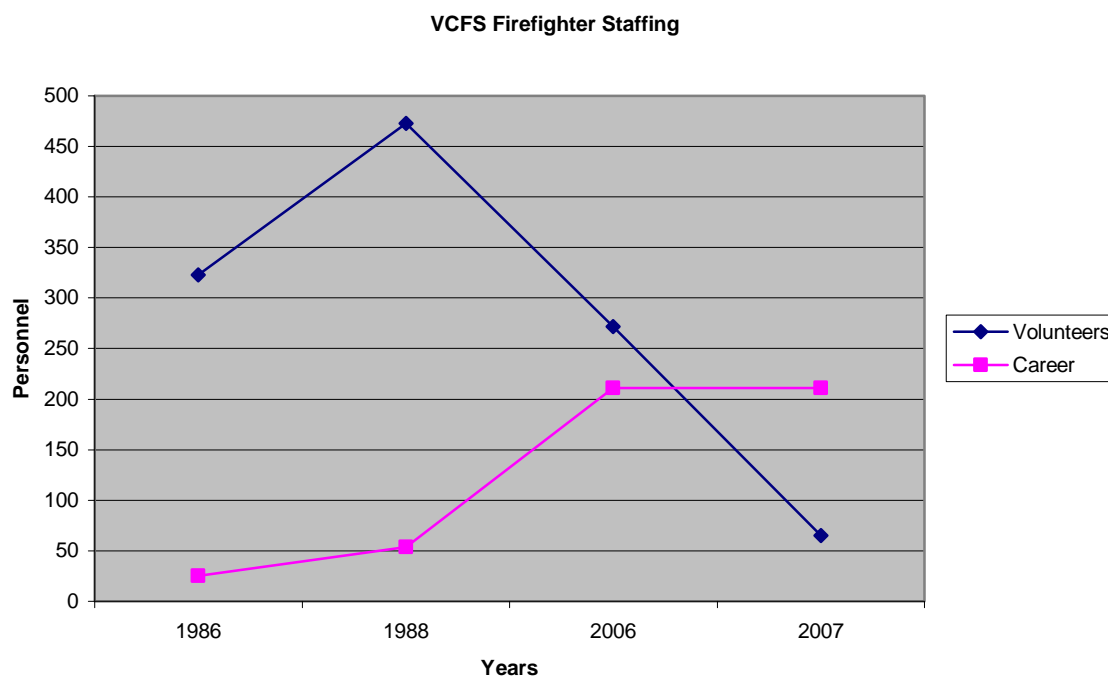


Figure 2. Fire Services Staffing Trend. Source: VCFS, 2007

Therefore Fire Services needs to assure volunteer members are adequately trained and being utilized to meet the needs of the department; however, volunteer members are currently



only required to attend their weekly station drills. The utilization of volunteers to assist with the staffing of fire stations that are below the recommended level of staffing recognized by Fire Services' administrators would be a win-win for both the volunteer members as well as Fire Services. This recommendation not only provides Fire Services with additional personnel resources at some of its busiest stations, but it also allows aspiring volunteer members a chance to see if they really want a job in the fire and rescue field, and not to mention the potential for a large pool of qualified applicants (Carter, 2006). To capitalize on this recommendation and utilize available resources this report suggests that Fire Services draft a policy that requires volunteer members (Appendix A):

1. Meet all requirements set forth by the State of Florida for Firefighter I certification and 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Medical Certification.
2. Each volunteer member must work a minimum of 24 hours a month at their assigned station to be eligible for drill compensation.
3. Volunteers who meet their required 24 hours a month, an established training fund will be available for eligible members in the amount of \$1000.00 per individual volunteer, to utilize to attend advanced training courses. However all of their probationary requirements must have been completed and verified by the Training Division.

***Recommendation 2*** – Completion of a Volunteer Firefighter Incentive Plan by the Volunteer Manager will allow both Fire Services and new or veteran volunteer members to know how to obtain training reimbursements, based on the institution of a mandatory attendance policy for volunteers (Appendix B). By having the Volunteer Manager undertake the planning and institution of specific operating guidelines designed for the volunteer members of Fire Services,

will provide volunteer members with a strong foundation and understanding of the structure of the volunteer program (Shin and Kleiner, 2003).

### **Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

The retention and selection of volunteers is a very challenging situation for nonprofit and public managers. To begin the entire process of retention, organizations need to first determine just what their needs are, determine if any revamping of existing organizational policies and procedures are required to accommodate volunteer members, and if needed, development of a set of succinct volunteer job descriptions. Of all of the three needs mentioned, a well designed and comprehensive volunteer job description allows potential applicants to fully understand the commitments and skills required for each of the volunteer classifications an organization is attempting to attract (Bradner, 1999). In addition, to the development of volunteer job descriptions, the use of a volunteer application and interview process for the selection of a potential volunteer is instrumental in the selection of the right person for the right volunteer job. Selecting the right person is important due to the excessive amount of time it takes to train an individual in the skills needed to fulfill their organizational role as a volunteer. It is recommended that every nonprofit or public agency utilize an application and interview process to screen applicants to determine their level of commitment as a core component of their recruitment process (Clay, 1998). By conducting interviews, which include the use of veteran volunteer members, allows potential volunteer applicants to understand the true nature of their work and also allows applicants to ask about the challenges associated with their unification with the organization. At the completion of the interview process the signing of a contract between the volunteer and the organization provides both parties with a clear indication of what is required from the organization, as well as, the volunteer member (Stepputat, 1999).

### Volusia County Fire Services Recruitment

Fire Services' Volunteer recruitment program is a very comprehensive process that provides each applicant with a plethora of information focusing on Fire Services, as well as the benefits of volunteering. For example, the current orientation program agenda utilized by Fire Services is comprised of the following: a brief history of Volusia County Fire Services (VCFS), a viewing of the VCFS recruitment video is shown, applicants are informed of various job classifications, applicants are indoctrinated to various situations they may encounter as a member, applicants are informed of their benefits, Fire Services' general rules and regulations are reviewed, an administration of the Physical Skills Assessment (based on classification applied for), and an open invitation to complete the acceptance process is extended to each applicant. (Dianne Nash, Personal Communication, October 22, 2007). Providing prospective volunteer members with all of this information along with specific policies and procedures according to Shin and Kleiner (2003), definitely "ensures applicant compliance, standardization, accountability, and leaves little confusion about specific organization rules." (p. 65). After about two to three weeks, subsequent to the completion of each applicant's background check and medical assessment and after each applicant has been cleared by the County Risk Management Physician, the applicants are then sent a letter notifying them of their departmental issued identification number. The letter also serves as a formal written notice of their assignment to the Training Services Team as a Probationary Volunteer Firefighter.

### Volunteer Recruitment Practices

Volusia County Fire Services currently utilizes a wide variety of processes to recruit volunteer members. The department makes use of the availability of the World Wide Web as a medium to provide access to their webpage, which allows interested applicants an opportunity to

print out an application on-line and then mail it into the Fire Services Training Center for processing. In addition, Fire Services has paid advertising spots in local movie theatres, local newspapers, and has even made arrangements within the Volusia County Library System to provide access to volunteer membership information. In fact, Volusia County Library Services has permitted Fire Services to place printed versions of the volunteer application in all of the Volusia County Public Libraries, which Stepputat (1999) maintained as one of the most important duties a volunteer administrator is responsible for, is how and when a volunteer receives and application to join a volunteer organization. It appears Fire Services' Volunteer Manager has done a wonderful job of promoting volunteerism based on the recorded numbers of volunteer applications received over the past nine years; however, the amount of applications approved fully have been considerable low in comparison, which required further review by this researcher (Figure 3).

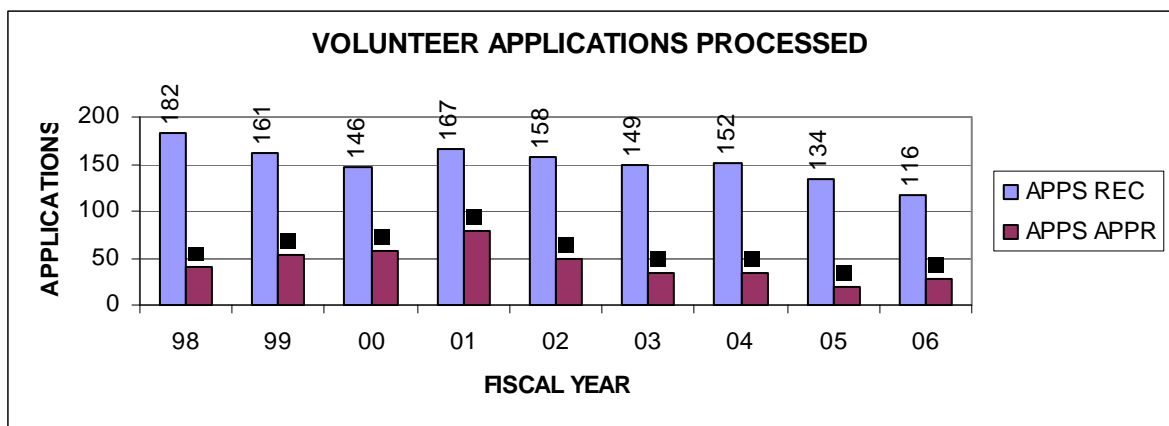


Figure 3. VCFS Volunteer Applications Received and Approved. Source: VCFS, 2007

Conversely when Fire Services relied heavily on each of the individual district station officers to review applications submitted for acceptance into community fire stations a similar result also occurred. It was found through research for this report that due to a lack of accountability and a verifiable submission process, Fire Services' Chief Executive Officer ended the practice of accepting applications by hand at the fire station level. Instead today the process

has been transformed into a full time administrative process which requires that each application be reviewed for completion by the Volunteer Manager before proceeding any further in the acceptance process. After receipt by the Volunteer Manager the applications are then forwarded to the Volunteer Records Coordinator which subsequently logs each application into a database. The application process is completed by following up each request with a formal letter to each applicant acknowledging receipt of their application. (Dianne Nash, Personal Communication, November 22, 2010). While this administrative change may have had a positive impact on the improvement of the application process, overall it may have also been detrimental to the volunteer and staff relationship. In retrospect, perhaps a team approach to the application process could have afforded the Volunteer District Officers and Fire Services' Administration a golden opportunity to address a minor problem and essentially build a stronger and more efficient team (Macduff, 1999). However, in stark contrast to the previous recruitment processes utilized by Fire Services, there has been a huge improvement in providing the community with an idea of what the department's mission is and its overall need for volunteers.

During the course of conducting research for this report, an assessment of the current recruitment techniques in use by Fire Services appeared to be a hybrid of the "generic" and "specific" approaches to matching volunteer applicants to the challenges and risks of accepting volunteer positions within Fire Services (Bradner, 1999). A literature review of both of these techniques showed it would be more beneficial for the Fire Services Volunteer Manager to focus on one method, preferably the "specific" recruitment technique. This reasoning was based on the potential number of members available for recruitment from the local community colleges and vocational training centers, which offer the firefighting minimum standards program within Volusia County.

If Fire Services' utilized the "specific" recruitment technique it could potentially attract a diverse group of applicants, which have already obtained the specific skills needed to fill the volunteer classifications offered by the department, not to mention the "specific" approach to recruitment could potentially provide Fire Services with a nice cross sectional representation of the community they serve, which is not frequently characterized well in many fire and rescue departments throughout the United States (Bradner, 1999). To aid Fire Services in their current team-building processes the recommendations of Macduff (1999) have been offered as a few suggestions that could be valuable alternatives for Fire Services' administrators. These recommendations mentioned later on in the report, if followed could provide Fire Services with a tried and tested approach to establishing a core group of dedicated retired volunteers to assist the Volunteer Manager in the recruitment of new volunteer members (Macduff, 1999).

In general, the current orientation process allows Fire Services' Volunteer Manager to provide applicants with an overview of the department and the positions available for volunteers. However, the orientation process also utilizes a physical skills assessment, of which each applicant is required to successfully complete. The department's physical agility process simulates the duties of the particular job they are interested in volunteering for with Fire Services which requires a successful completion of the skills assessment to allow the applicant to move to the next step of the process. The final requirements for acceptance by interested applicants are: the criminal background including a fingerprint check and a medical evaluation by the Volusia County Division of Risk Management. Upon successful completion of each of these requirements, the volunteer applicant is officially assigned to the Fire Services Training Division.

## Selection Process

Fire Services has three volunteer classifications interested volunteer applicants can chose to serve as in their community. Each of these classifications has a brief description for each of the job assignment and the requirements for each position attached to the Volusia County Fire Services volunteer application. Each of the jobs available to volunteer members consist of: firefighter, driver/engineer, and EMS rescue. The actual descriptions utilized in the volunteer applications for all three job descriptions mentioned are provided here for review (Table 1) which typically allows interested applicants with an overall perspective of each volunteer position along with any identified risks associated with the position and in addition, allows Fire Services to meet the health and safety needs of each volunteer applicant (Bradner, 1999).

Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Position(s) and Job Descriptions	
Position	Job Description
Firefighter	Must be in excellent physical condition. Firefighter volunteers respond to all types of emergencies and participate in the extinguishment of all fires. Members clean and care for all equipment; complete and maintain official reports to document actions, and assist at community presentations. They use a variety of tools and equipment. Firefighters will assist with extrication of victims from vehicle crashes. May be required to drive fire apparatus to fire and accident scenes. Firefighter volunteers receive specialized training and are issued specialized protective clothing for the performance of their duties.
Driver/Engineer	Must be in excellent physical condition. Driver/Engineer volunteers drive fire apparatus to and from fire and accident scenes. Members are responsible for the operation of apparatus pumps. Driver/Engineer volunteers will clean and care for all equipment; complete and maintain official reports to document actions, and assist at community presentations. Driver/Engineer volunteers receive specialized training and are issued specialized protective clothing for the performance of their duties.
EMS/Rescue	Must be in excellent physical condition. EMS/Rescue volunteers render emergency medical aid at fire and accident scenes and assist the sick and injured. EMS/Rescue volunteers will: clean and care for all medical equipment; assure proper medical supply levels are

maintained; complete and maintain official reports to document actions, and assist at community presentations. They may be authorized to drive rescue units to fire and accident scenes. EMS/Rescue volunteers receive specialized training and are issued specialized protective clothing for the performance of their duties.

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Table 1. Volunteer Job Descriptions for VCFS. Source: VCFS 2007

Unfortunately, it was found during this author's research, that there have never been any clear or concise job descriptions available for any of the volunteer positions within Fire Services, but the Fire Chief has recognized that detailed job descriptions still need to be completed for each position (Mark Edgil, Personal Communication, October, 22, 2007).

#### Applicant Interviews

In the past Volunteer District Officers managed each of the County's 24 volunteer fire stations and were originally charged with interviewing applicants interested in volunteering with Volusia County Fire Services. Each of the 24 Volunteer District officers was empowered to schedule interviews with interested applicants, typically on station drill nights. However, station drill nights were essentially scheduled to be training nights for volunteer members of Fire Services. While there was no official interview process or procedures to follow during the interview process, the interview sessions did serve their purpose. The interviews allowed interested applicants an opportunity to meet with the station Volunteer District Officers and participate in the scheduled station drills.

As time went by Fire Services began to notice that there was a lot of volunteer interest in the community and with the application process assigned to a full time staff employee, when an applicant arrives at their local neighborhood fire station looking to volunteer they are given an application and told to contact the Volunteer Manager located in the Volusia County Fire Services Administration building. Although no official interview process is utilized the



Volunteer Manager makes sure that the application has been completed in full and has all the required attachments. The attachments required for each application are: a General Equivalency Diploma or High School Diploma and a valid driver license. If all the required paperwork is attached and the application is completed in full the applicant's data is entered into a database and a letter is drafted inviting the prospective volunteer to attend the department's orientation program. Once the invitation letter is mailed the application process is complete and the Volunteer Manager then forwards the applications to the Volunteer Records Coordinator for the creation of a personnel file. Included within the applicants personnel file are copies of any current certifications the volunteer applicant would like to submit to the Training Division for evaluation of compliance within the State of Florida, a copy of the volunteers background investigation results, a copy of their annual physical results, a copy of their drivers license and the applicants emergency contact information (Dianne Nash, Personal Communication, October, 23, 2007).

***Recommendation 1*** – Because Fire Services does not require a volunteer member to sign a contract the use of a job description with an area for the volunteer to sign that clearly identifies the requirements and responsibilities of holding the volunteer position is needed (Appendix C, D, and E). The overall benefit of having the volunteer applicant sign the job description is to allow the applicant the opportunity to determine if they can devote the time for their training and to the organization before progressing to far into the indoctrination process. The job description (contract) also clarifies the assignment for the volunteer and is a legal requirement for Fire Services in case of any litigation (Stepputat, 1999). Fire Services' Senior Leadership Team has realized as result of this report that detailed and succinct job descriptions could allow prospective applicants an ability to determine their individual commitments to meeting the requirements of

the volunteer position, as well as, increase the likelihood that the applicant will volunteer based on their ability to make an informed decision. (Shin & Kleiner, 2003).

***Recommendation 2*** – Recruitment requires sending the right message to volunteer members. To accomplish this Fire Services should incorporate either retired or current volunteer members into the recruitment and orientation process. This organizational cultural change could allow Fire Services to develop a rapport with all of the volunteer applicants almost instantaneously. In addition, it is recommended that Fire Services create a Fire Services Volunteer Recruiting Team. The use of a recruitment team composed of either veteran or retired volunteer members would allow the Volunteer Manager an opportunity to focus primarily on the administrative issues related to the volunteer program; however the recruitment process would continue to progress on recruiting applicants at the various community colleges, etc.

### **Volunteer Training**

Development of a volunteer training program is a very important task. It is through the use of an organizational training program that the responsibility for the development of every volunteer's educational foundation is garnered. In fact, many organizations rely very heavily on the abilities of volunteer members to implement the goals of an organization; therefore it is recommended that effective job classifications which are based on verifiable training are utilized to meet both individual volunteers as well as an organizations needs (Lulewicz, 1999). Coincidentally it is generally recommended just from a risk management and liability point of view that, issues such as the potential for negligence can arise, which often revert back to the initial training a volunteer received (Quattrochi, 1999). This is where the recommendation that adequate training and organizational mentoring be provided for volunteers to assure that

generalized accepted “standards” are being required by managers for volunteer members, when it comes to the need for volunteers to have specialized skills or knowledge.

To meet this need Fire Services requires that every three months the Volunteer Manager and his assistant, the Volunteer Records Coordinator meet and greet the prospective applicants for an informal overview of the department’s history, volunteer opportunities, and the completion of administrative paperwork required to enroll volunteers into the Volunteer Academy. During this process there are typically two staff members in attendance at the orientation process, which has been recognized as an area of concern by the Volunteer Manager. The Volunteer Manager recognized that paid staff members have no idea of what it feels like to enter into an organization as a volunteer, and realized it would be beneficial to have an experienced or retired volunteer member share their experiences with the newer applicants and to answer the candidates training questions. Utilization of this type of format would help Fire Services to fill the organizational relationship gap between the newer applicants and the full – time staff members (Stepputat, 1999). Since the beginning of this report there has been considerable discussion about the development of a team of volunteers and staff personnel capable of providing new applicants with a quality training process. Unfortunately, at present Fire Services’ volunteers are still rarely contacted by Training Division personnel to determine if any concerns or issues are being encountered during their Volunteer Academy training sessions.

#### Probationary Period

Upon successful acceptance into Fire Services, applicants begin their mandatory one year of probation and are required to attend the departments Volunteer Academy. The Volunteer Academy is a volunteer training program designed to provide each applicant with all of the courses required to complete their probationary training requirements for each of the specific job

classifications. While there are well over 260 hours of training required for the Volunteer Firefighter classification, Fire Services has broken the training requirements into manageable modules to allow volunteer firefighters to complete their foundational training. Typically volunteer organizations help their members through many of the challenges of training by, “helping them with their education; coordinating training classes to meet the needs of the candidates, making them feel welcome, and rewarding them for their success: i.e., uniforms, department T-shirts, etc.” (Carter, 2006, p. 58). Fire Services adopted this philosophy years ago as a way to assist volunteer firefighters through Volunteer Academy Block I. In fact, Fire Services’ managerial staff have as result of participating in the research needed for this report realized that the training of volunteer members is a monumental task therefore, the organization has recently required that the Volunteer Manager stay current with all issues that affect the volunteer members’ on a broader scale and recommended that a new training mentorship program to be developed to assist volunteer members (Stepputat, 1999).

### Training Recommendations

***Recommendation 1*** – The use of a newly developed training program would require each volunteer member attending the Volunteer Academy, to be assigned to a veteran member of Fire Services, which mentors the new volunteer. The newly developed program mandates that the volunteer member will meet once week at a scheduled station drill with their mentor to review their assigned study materials and/or practice and perfect the skills needed to pass the Firefighter I certification test required by the State of Florida. An example of the draft training program is attached for review as a part of this report (Appendix F).

### **Volunteer Retention**

There are many barriers to the retention of volunteers within a nonprofit organization; however, with a little creativity an organization's efforts to maintaining its key personnel can be rather rewarding. The ability to keep volunteers satisfied within an organization and keeping their roles positive is dependent on a couple of factors. Jamison (2003) referred to these as "hygiene factors" which allow volunteers to develop good interdepartmental working relationships, supportive management by supervisors, challenging job assignments, and the potential for fair and equitable treatment from full time staff. In addition, one of the universally recognized approaches to retention of volunteers has been the use of awards, recognition events, and the use of an evaluation instrument by volunteers resigning from their organizational positions. It has been found that a lot of organizational knowledge can be garnered from an exiting member of an organization. In fact, questions that managers wouldn't ask and that would otherwise would go on unanswered, are given in an honest and unbridled fashion by exiting volunteer members (Bradner, 1999).

#### **VCFS Retention Practices**

Fire Services offers a collage of benefits for their volunteer members, such as: an annual appreciation dinner, departmental issued uniforms and protective equipment, monetary drill reimbursement for attending station drills, paid life insurance, a paid pension (retirement) system, initial and on-going training, and an annual medical physical free of cost (Dianne Nash, Personal Communication, October 18, 2007). It has been recognized that within the fire service industry, retention for volunteer fire departments has steadily become an issue because individuals have to work long hours or sometimes two jobs to make ends meet in today's society. Fortunately, one of the potential retention possibilities Fire Services has been discussing is the

implementation of “reserve firefighters” into the organization. Reserves are still volunteers, but the biggest difference in the traditional volunteer and a reserve firefighter is the minimal attendance requirements of which “reserves” simply sign up for the minimally required hours, such as 12 hours per month of on-duty time at the fire station (Carter, 2006). The Volunteer Manager has readily accepted this recommendation and was very interested in conducting a needs assessment to identify, survey, and perceive the possibility of establishing an episodic volunteer program such as a “reserve firefighter corps” in Fire Services, which could be formalized and implemented into the existing volunteer firefighting program (Macduff, 1999). With forward thinking such as this, Fire Services should be able to maintain its loyal dedicated volunteers, while still providing the community with a quality fire rescue service.

Although Fire Services does offer a variety of benefits and has made plans for the future, one of its biggest short falls is in the area of conducting exit interviews with volunteer members who have left the organization. This is one area that is of extreme importance to the retention of both current and future volunteers. The use of an exit interview provides opportunities for evaluation, which normally allows volunteer members a chance to provide an objective perspective of their volunteer experiences with their Volunteer Manager or Volunteer Liaison (Bradner, 1999). The exit interview process could also provide valuable data for fire service administrators to review to determine any potential concerns that have been observed by those members leaving the organization.

#### Recommendations for Recruitment and Retention

***Recommendation 1*** – Currently Volusia County Fire Services terminates volunteers after an inactive period of one year, unfortunately the volunteer members are rarely contacted to

determine what caused their inactivity. If there are internal circumstances which are related to the management or operation of the volunteer program, that are causing volunteers not to participate. The Volunteer Manager has no idea these situations even exist and the use of an exit interview process will allow the Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Manager to receive the most valuable information possible about the status of the volunteer program first hand (Stepputat, 1999). It has been found that exiting volunteer members are typically more willing to share candid comments with managers when they are leaving an organization and the use of a written exit interview would allow for considerable feedback to be collected (Appendix G). Upon completion of the interview the data collected could be analyzed to determine what areas need to be addressed to improve volunteer experiences for existing or future members.

### **Volunteer Program Risk Management**

#### **Risk Assessment**

To prepare an organization for the minimization of risk requires a coordinated approach of managers in three distinct areas: political connectivity, policy documentation, and the focus of strategic goals aimed at protecting an organization and its internal resources (Steen & Smith, 2007). The benefits of taking these approaches to risk management allows an organization to maximize completion of all three of these components needed to assure that the organization has the ability to maximize its opportunities, while still minimizing its threat of liabilities. As a part of this report a review of scholarly journals provided a few key recommendations. The first recommendation focuses on the use of assuring that “job descriptions” are prepared for all employees, including volunteers (Martinez, 2003). The usage of detailed job description assures managers that there are no misunderstandings in regards to exactly what a volunteer’s responsibilities entail once they have elected to join an organization. While this may not seem to

be a major recommendation, from an organizational liability standpoint it is a perfect way for either public or nonprofit organizations to protect themselves from workplace risks and ensure volunteers are trained adequately and appropriately to meet the needs of the organization and minimize both an organizations and volunteer's liability (Quattrochi, 1999; Martinez, 2003).

#### VCFS Risk Management Practices

Currently Volusia County Fire Services utilizes a trend and analysis approach to risk assessment. To accomplish this Fire Services requires any injuries, equipment/ property damage, training issues, or near miss (potentially dangerous situations) events to be documented in a detailed and comprehensive reporting document known as an Auto/Incident Report. The incident report is a seven page document for recording all the circumstances around an incident involving an employee's injury or damage to a piece of equipment.

In addition, on a quarterly basis the department's Safety Committee, which is composed of both volunteer and career members, is charged with reviewing each incident report to determine Fire Services' overall level of risk (Barry Ellis, Personal Communication, November 4, 2007). Because Fire Services is an emergency services agency its administrators have placed safety for both the citizens and its staff (volunteer and career) high on the department's priority list. In fact, based on the results of an interview with Fire Services' Deputy Chief of Operations this researcher was able to develop the following risk assessment matrix (Steve Plummer, Personal Communication, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007). The assessment criteria was based on Fire Services most commonly identified risks and their associated levels of severity and relative frequency of occurrences based on an average number of events recorded in the departments Risk Management office over the last five years.



VCFS Risk Assessment Matrix

Consequences					Likelihood			
Personnel	Safety/Health	Financial	Training	Agency Liability	A	B	C	D
					Unlikely Occurrence	Could Occur	Has been Known To Occur	Frequently Occurs
1	Minor Injuries	Property/Equipment Damage (< \$500)	Low Impact	Minor Effect	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Major Injuries	Property/Equipment Damage (< \$10,000)	Medium Impact	Medium Effect	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
3	Debilitating Injuries	Property/Equipment Damage (\$10K-\$100K)	High Impact	Major Effect	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme

Table 4. Risk Assessment Data for VCFS

Source: VCFS, 2007

Most of the risks identified within the matrix listed above are based on both volunteer and career responses to emergency scenes. Unfortunately both fire and medical emergency scenes typically have a high potential for risk to personnel in regards to their safety and health, a potential for property and equipment damages, impacts for malpractice or malfeasance due to medical treatment and/or care, and the potential for overall liability of county government based on a vicarious liability or *responde at superior* relationship that volunteer and career members have as agents of Volusia County Government (Quattrocki, 1999).

Each of the following risks are identified under the consequences section of the matrix: Personnel Safety and Health is based on an employees potential for injury while operating both in the non-emergency and emergency setting, (i.e., accident scenes, working around the station, etc.). Financial consequences are risks that are associated with property damages to either departmental equipment or citizens' property, (i.e., lost or damaged protective equipment, damaged driveways from heavy fire apparatus, etc.). Training consequences are an aggregate of

personnel injuries and damaged equipment and the potential for punitive damages from a lawsuit from improperly training personnel.

Although Volunteer Firefighters provide emergency medical care, and are members of the local fire department, and often have statutory immunities; it doesn't mean that their organizations are exempt from cases of negligence due to an organizations failure to properly train its volunteer members. In fact, allowing volunteers to operate below an acceptable "standard of care," that a reasonable volunteer would provide given the same level of training (Quattrocki, 1999) is a red flag for managers to evaluate. In sum, the Volunteer Manager is ultimately responsible for evaluating every volunteer member's level of competency on a continual basis. Agency liability is a serious consequence based on the exposure of Volusia County Government in general, and has to be an organizational priority based on the amount of employees providing services to the community as a whole.

Another one of the biggest risks Fire Services exposes itself to on a continuous basis is in the department's pre-volunteer orientation. This risk can be considered a "high" risk and to assist Fire Services with this, a revamped application and liability release form has been created for use during the recruitment of new volunteer employees. Because Volusia County Government is self insured and provides coverage itself for liabilities such as Workers' Compensation and generally all of its liabilities, it is recommended that volunteer applicants be required to sign a hold harmless agreement prior to beginning their agility test (Appendix H). The justification for this is based on the fact that without any preparatory training or required medical screening or physical exam, Fire Services requires applicants to complete the Volunteer Agility test for acceptance into the organization. This has the potential to have a very deleterious impact on the department's credibility, economic stability and community reputation from a risk management point of view.

### Risk Management Techniques

Fire Services currently utilizes “avoidance” and “loss control” approaches to risk management to help protect the organization from any losses. To assure that the volunteer members of Fire Services are aware of the jobs they can perform based on their classifications, individual zones of coverage for operating at an emergency scene and the limitations of their services to the public, and along with the use of a written standard operating guideline has been produced. The guideline, “Volume I, Guideline 104.003: Volunteer Member Standards” provides a definition for each of the volunteer classifications, along with their job responsibilities, and the areas they are allowed to operate in, on an emergency scene (i.e., Combat Volunteers Firefighters are allowed to enter into any Hot, Warm, or Cold Zone on emergency scenes, etc.). These zones are defined as “control zones” and are based on the actual location of hazards identified on an emergency scene. For example, a Hot Zone is an area that represents the greatest degree of risk to department personnel; the other identified zones would lessen in severity as they expanded outward from the epicenter of the incident.

Contained within the same guideline is the department’s approach to reducing the possibility of risk through the use of loss control. In fact, loss control is primarily the best way to reduce liability within organizations that require managers to provide oversight to both volunteer and career members (Vargo, 1999). Each volunteer member’s acceptance into the organization is based on their abilities to meet the following requirements for all classifications. Currently applicants must complete the following for Fire Services:

1. Completion of the Fire Services Orientation course.
2. Successful complete a background check.
3. Successful completion of an assessment agility test (same as career applicants).

4. Successful completion of a comprehensive medical examination.

Upon successfully completing each of these four requirements, volunteer members are required to successfully meet all of the training requirements for their assigned job classifications. For instance, because many of these volunteers will be exposed to harmful biological and chemical hazards, both individual and organizational precautions must be taken. Typically the precautions taken are in the form of initial and on-going in-service training in areas such as, Bloodborne Pathogens, Hazardous Materials Awareness, and an intensive Emergency Vehicle Operations Course. In addition to departmental training each of the volunteer members are provided with a copy of each of Fire Services Standard Operating Guidelines. These guidelines (policies) allow Fire Services to minimize its overall risk by providing volunteer members with a verifiable source of personnel policies for their review as needed (Steen & Smith, 2007).

Risk Management Reporting Process

Fire Services utilizes Standard Operating Guideline 105.002 to define the duties and responsibilities of volunteer and career firefighters if they are injured, and/or have property lost, damaged, or stolen. Standard Operating Guideline 105.002 contains within it a copy of the County of Volusia – Auto/Incident Report Form, which is required to be filled out utilizing the procedures established by the County Risk Manager, insurance carrier, and office of worker's compensation. With the use of the form and the operating guideline: any injury to a firefighter, any accident with a county vehicle or lost or damaged equipment must be completed within 24 hours and sent directly to the Fire Services' Deputy Chief of Operations. Overall this process seems to work appropriately and it was reported that the incident reports are completed and processed in a timely manner. Based on the assessment of this process it appears Fire Services

has demonstrated and nurtured a positive incentive to minimize its liabilities through the use of a comprehensive risk management process (Martinez, 1999).

#### Risk Management Recommendations

***Recommendation 1*** – Based on the potential for negligence when volunteer members are utilized in the field setting for Fire Services, especially when it comes to the need for volunteer members to administer emergency medical assistance it is imperative that Fire Services utilize some type of supervised medical clearance process for its volunteer staff before releasing them for field work. In fact, according to Martinez (2003:157) “training volunteers on appropriate ways to avoid incidents and ensuring that they understand how to respond in emergency situations also serve to minimize liability.” Unfortunately negligence of both volunteer and career members seems to be one of the biggest areas of concern as reflected in the department’s risk assessment. Adoption of a verifiable and documented medical training and clearance process would allow volunteer members to become proficient at dealing with various medical emergencies and the associated required treatment of emergency medical victims. Combined with working alongside an experience medical practitioner, also would allow volunteer members to be comfortable with each of the potential circumstances where specialized knowledge or experience is needed to decrease the chances of any organizational liability for unreasonable conduct on the part of the volunteer member (Quattrochi, 1999).

Currently volunteer members attending the Volunteer Academy obtain their required certifications and are released to practice as First Responders in the field setting, whereas higher trained staff must be cleared to practice in the field setting through a battery of written and skills based testing. One of the best approaches to reduce liability in a volunteer organization is to

manage volunteer members utilizing the same criteria and requirements that the organization utilizes to manage their full time personnel (Vargo, 1999).

***Recommendation 2*** – Fire Services has a well designed safety program and incident reporting process; however, the findings of the Safety Committee’s quarterly review are rarely shared with the key leaders of the organization. It is recommended that at each of the quarterly safety committee meetings, the Director or his designee attend each of the meetings to maintain a clear line of communication about the inherent risks the agency has identified, along with ways for managing the risks. Often the management of these risks requires funding that typically that is not budgeted for throughout the year, (i.e., recommendations for hearing protection for firefighters while operating loud cutting equipment, such as saws, etc.) If the Director or his designee is present at these meetings it would be easier for him to garner support from the organizations legislative leaders and defend it with in the political context. Typically the legislative branch is where the largest support for purchases are garnered an ongoing basis. As a matter of fact, having a medium for clear communication and political connectivity through an organization’s leader has been shown to be more beneficial to an agency’s survival and maximization of its chances for overall improvement (Steen & Smith, 2007).

***Recommendation 3*** – An adoption of a volunteer employee handbook has been another area of contention identified as a part of this critique. Fire Services has a majority of its operational guidelines, organizational requirements, and personnel forms available on-line and only accessible to active members of the organization. It is recommended that Fire Services produce a Volunteer Handbook, which includes within it an updated volunteer application and hold harmless agreement (Appendix H).

Standard Operating Guideline 104.003, which is entitled, “Volunteer Member Standards,” could also be included with a copy of the updated job descriptions provided as a part of this report (Appendix C, D, and E). The use of a Volunteer Handbook, could allow volunteer applicants a chance to see what their requirements for acceptance would entail, along with the expectations of the volunteer employees and the organization itself (Eide, 1999). In addition, the handbook would contain clear definitive job descriptions which are needed for all members of an organization, including volunteers, to allow all employees to know where each of their individual responsibilities and activities fall, in regards to the scope of their job performances (Martinez, 2003).

### **Conclusion**

Volunteers have always played a key role in supporting the public’s health and safety throughout Volusia County. However with the advent of the traditional fire department, many volunteer fire departments have evolved into an all-paid emergency response type of organization, with the use of paid professional firefighters delivering a large part of the emergency services. While Volusia County Fire Services is the only department in Volusia County to utilize a combination (volunteer and career) fire and EMS delivery system it has not precluded the use of volunteers to augment its delivery of emergency services from seven Basic Life Support and seventeen Advanced Life Support fire stations (total of 24 stations) which are located throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. In fact, the use of approximately sixty volunteer members to augment the career firefighters to well over 13,130 rescue (EMS) throughout this year, has been a testament to the fact that volunteerism is still alive and well within Volusia County Fire Services.

In sum, Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Firefighter Program is very progressive and has been in existence for well over twenty years; however, some of its practices are in need of an upgrade to remain vigilant with providing opportunities for volunteers, just as many of the other nonprofit organizations and fire departments that are competing for volunteer resources are doing. Some of the major findings of this report focused on the areas of establishing new updated and succinct volunteer employment policies, the use of detailed job classifications and position descriptions, implementation of an exit interview process to evaluate why volunteer members are leaving Fire Services, and the use of an updated volunteer application/ hold harmless agreement to relieve Volusia County Government from any potential liabilities. By addressing each of these areas through the use of the recommendations contained within this report and the leadership provided by Fire Services' proactively thinking Volunteer Manager, the use of volunteers within a combination fire department setting will be around for years to come and will allow Volusia County Fire Services to be the model for all other combination fire departments to utilize for comparison.



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## **Appendices**

Appendix A ....	Volunteer Incentives and training Suggestions Information
Appendix B ....	Volunteer Drill Reimbursement SOG
Appendix C ....	Volunteer Firefighter Job Description*
Appendix D ....	Volunteer Driver Engineer Job Description*
Appendix E ....	Volunteer EMS Rescue Job Description*
Appendix F.....	Volunteer In-training Mentorship SOG
Appendix G.....	Volunteer Exit Interview
Appendix H.....	Revised Volunteer Application and Hold Harmless Agreement

\* Adopted From Existing VCFS Job Descriptions. Source: VCFS, 2007

Appendix A  
Volunteer Incentives and Training  
Suggestions Information

**PLAN A:**

1. Member must meet all requirements set forth by the State of Florida for firefighter I certification/1<sup>st</sup> Responder certification.
2. Member must work a minim of 24 hours a month (this can be accomplished by working 1 -24 hour shift or working 2-12hours shifts at their assigned station to be eligible for extra benefits.
3. Double the in-station drill pay for all volunteers that qualify with the established requirements set forth by the organization.
4. Provide a training fund of no less than \$1,000 per year that will be available to each volunteer member for training purposes once all other training requirements have been completed (i.e. Firefighter I cert. and probationary requirements).

**PLAN B:**

1. Member must meet all requirements set forth by the State of Florida for firefighter II certification and State of Florida EMT and/or Paramedic certification. Must also possess a CPR card and all requirements set forth by the organization and the medical director.
2. Member must work a minim of 24 hours a month (this can be accomplished by working 1 -24 hour shift or working 2-12hours shifts) at their assigned station to be eligible for extra benefits.
3. Double the in-station drill pay for all volunteers that qualify with the established requirements set forth by the organization.
4. Provide a fund of no less than \$1,000 per year that will be available to each volunteer member for training purposes once all other training requirements have been completed (i.e. Firefighter II cert., EMT cert. and probationary requirements).

**PLAN C - Reserve Program:**

1. Member must meet all requirements set forth by the State of Florida for firefighter II certification and State of Florida EMT and/or Paramedic certification. Must also possess a CPR card and all requirements set forth by the organization and the medical director.
2. Member must work a minim of 24 hours a month (this can be accomplished by working 1 -24 hour shift or working 2-12hours shifts at their assigned station to be eligible for extra benefits.
3. Member is compensated a predetermined dollar amount for working shift work (duration described above). Educational requirements must meet all established requirements set forth by the organization.
4. Provide a fund of no less than \$1,000 per year that will be available to each volunteer member for training purposes once all other training requirements have been completed (i.e. Firefighter II cert., EMT cert. and probationary requirements).

Appendix B  
**VOLUSIA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICES**  
 DIRECTIVE (Recommendation)

<b>VOLUME:</b> I <b>DIRECTIVE:</b> 301.003	<b>SUBJECT: Volunteer Drill Reimbursement</b>
<b>REFERENCE:</b> N/A	<b>ISSUING AUTHORITY: Fire Services Director</b>
<u>  X  </u> <b>RESCINDS:</b> T-1-88 <u>     </u> <b>AMENDS:</b> N/A	<b>DATE ISSUED:</b> January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2008
	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2008

I. PURPOSE:

To define minimum attendance requirements for station training drills and provide criteria for reimbursement of training expenses.

II. SCOPE:

- A. The Senior Lieutenant or Battalion Commander is responsible for reviewing the monthly probationary status of each member and taking appropriate action for their assigned stations.
- B. Individual volunteer members are responsible for meeting established requirements to complete probation.
- C. The Training Division will monitor volunteer status and remove the volunteer from probation when all requirements have been fulfilled.

III. RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of the Training Division to review and update this directive.

IV. DRILL REIMBURSEMENT STANDARD:

- A. All volunteers shall attend a minimum of two in station training drills per month.
- B. The Battalion Commander assigned oversight for their respective station(s) is responsible for maintaining a record of the training given and attendees present.
- C. Volunteer Firefighters will be reimbursed at a rate of \$9.00 per training drill.
- D. Officers will be reimbursed at a rate of \$12.00 per training drill.
- E. Business meetings of volunteer associations are considered a drill, and therefore eligible for training expense reimbursement.
- F. Only one (1) training drill per week shall be eligible for reimbursement.

Appendix C  
**VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER**

**CODES/PAY RANGE**

Class Code: 3909

EEO Code: D

Pay Range: Non-Salaried Position

**MAJOR FUNCTION**

General firefighting work in the suppression, extinguishment and prevention of fires, protecting life and property; delivery of emergency medical and rescue services; and in maintaining division equipment and facilities.

**ILLUSTRATIVE DUTIES**

(NOTE: These are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position.)

Responds to fire alarms with fire company. Lays and connects hose and directs fog or water stream. Raises and climbs ladders. Uses bars, extinguisher, hooks, line, and other equipment. Makes forcible entry into buildings when necessary. Ventilates building. Opens walls and other structures to impede the effective fighting of the fires.

Assists in rescuing people from burning buildings or other hazardous locations. Renders first aid when needed.

Receives fire alarms by telephone, radio or industrial alarm systems, and other emergency calls. Ascertains the nature of the fire or emergency, its location, and dispatches necessary personnel and equipment to the scene.

Performs salvage operations including but not limited to throwing salvage covers, sweeping water, and removing debris.

Performs overall operations as needed at all fire, rescue and emergency scenes.

Performs general maintenance work in the upkeep of division facilities. Cleans and washes walls and floors. Makes minor repairs to facilities and equipment. Washes, hangs, and dries hose. Washes, cleans, repairs, polishes, and tests apparatus. Performs tests on pumps, hoses, breathing apparatus, and other equipment.

Is subject to emergency call duty as part of the regular duties whether on or off duty.

May be assigned duties as acting volunteer lieutenant.

**(Volunteer Firefighter continued )**

Attends company drills and scheduled in-service training exercises. Participates as required in all drills and training sessions involving both practical and classroom applications. Keeps current and up to date in all phases of job responsibilities through seminars and college courses.

Drives and operates all fire apparatus including engines, pumpers, tankers, brush trucks, tractors, sedans, and other specialized equipment. Watches condition of motor and unit during operation and makes necessary adjustment or reports defects.

Operates extrication and other specialized tools.

Prepares for pumping operations by seeing that hydrant connections are made. Pumps water to fire at designated pressure.

Performs related work as required.

**KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND SKILLS**

Knowledge of first aid methods. Knowledge of the street system and geography of the County.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with associates and the public. Ability to understand and follow oral and written instructions. Ability to perform prolonged and arduous work under adverse conditions. Ability to learn a wide variety of firefighting duties and methods within a reasonable training period.

Coordination and physical strength sufficient to pass a physical ability test.

Mechanical aptitude and ability to learn and operate relatively complex equipment.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

Graduation from high school or possession of a GED. Must meet the minimum requirements set forth by the Florida Firefighter Standards and Training Council as having completed the basic firefighting training courses referred to as the "Minimum Standards Course," and possess a Certificate of Compliance from the Bureau of Standards and Training.

Additional qualifications determine pay grade assignment:

Possess and maintain Florida State Certification as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Possess and maintain Florida State Certification as a Paramedic.

**(Volunteer Firefighter continued )**

One (1) year of firefighting experience equivalent to entry level firefighter with the County.

The County offers and additional pay grade incentive based on meeting educational guidelines after successful completion of two years of service with Volusia County Fire Services.

Possession of a valid Florida commercial license, Class D with an E exemption. Must successfully pass rigid physical examination including drug screening.

A comparable amount of education, training, or experience may be substituted for the minimum qualifications.

**ADA REQUIREMENTS**

Physical Demands: Heavy to very heavy work. Ability to see, hear, talk, lift (100 lbs.), carry, push, stand, climb, crouch, balance, handle, fingering, pull, walk, crawl, kneel, reach.

Environmental Demands: Both inside and outside work. Potential hazardous work conditions. Ability to tolerate heat, inclement weather (rain, cold, humidity), water, odors, dust, poor ventilation, fumes, toxic fumes.

Mental Demands: Ability to read and comprehend professional, technical and scientific journals, manuals and procedures; safety instructions, memos, letters, policies, and reports. Ability to perform shop math and general mathematical functions. Ability to write summaries and reports. Ability to speak clearly and concisely relating information, data and details to layman; conversant in theory and practices of discipline.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix D  
**VOLUNTEER DRIVER ENGINEER**

**CODES/PAY RANGE**

Class Code: 3910

EEO Code: D

Pay Range: Non-Salaried Position

**MAJOR FUNCTION**

General firefighting work in the operation of fire apparatus, provides assistance to firefighters when performing the extinguishment and prevention of fires, protecting life and property; delivery of emergency medical and rescue services; and in maintaining division equipment and facilities. Drives and operates all fire apparatus including engines, pumpers, tankers, brush trucks, tractors, sedans, and other specialized equipment. Watches condition of motor and unit during operation and makes necessary adjustment or reports defects. Prepares for pumping operations by seeing that hydrant connections are made. Pumps water to fire at designated pressure.

**ILLUSTRATIVE DUTIES**

(NOTE: These are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position.)

Responds to fire alarms by driving fire apparatus. Lays and connects hose and directs fog or water stream. Makes hydrant and fire pump connections. Provides firefighting personnel with bars, extinguisher, hooks, line, and other equipment. Assists in rescuing people from burning buildings or other hazardous locations when needed. Renders first aid when needed.

Receives fire alarms by telephone, radio or industrial alarm systems, and other emergency calls. Ascertains the nature of the fire or emergency, its location, and dispatches necessary personnel and equipment to the scene.

Performs overall operations as needed at all fire, rescue and emergency scenes.

Performs general maintenance work in the upkeep of division facilities. Cleans and washes walls and floors. Makes minor repairs to facilities and equipment. Washes, hangs, and dries hose. Washes, cleans, repairs, polishes, and tests apparatus. Performs tests on pumps, hoses, breathing apparatus, and other equipment. Solely responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of division equipment and apparatus.

Attends company drills and scheduled in-service training exercises. Participates as required in all drills and training sessions involving both practical and classroom applications. Keeps current and up to date in all phases of job responsibilities through seminars and college courses.

Operates extrication and other specialized tools.

Performs related work as required.

### KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Knowledge of first aid methods. Knowledge of the street system and geography of the County.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with associates and the public. Ability to understand and follow oral and written instructions. Ability to perform prolonged and arduous work under adverse conditions. Ability to learn a wide variety of firefighting duties and methods within a reasonable training period.

Coordination and physical strength sufficient to pass a physical ability test.

Mechanical aptitude and ability to learn and operate relatively complex equipment.

### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Graduation from high school or possession of a GED. Must meet the minimum requirements set forth by the Florida Firefighter Standards and Training Council as having completed the basic firefighting training courses referred to as the "Minimum Standards Course," and possess a Certificate of Compliance from the Bureau of Standards and Training.

Additional qualifications determine pay grade assignment:

Possess and maintain Florida State Certification as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or First Responder medical training.

### ADA REQUIREMENTS

Physical Demands: Heavy to very heavy work. Ability to see, hear, talk, lift (100 lbs.), carry, push, stand, climb, crouch, balance, handle, fingering, pull, walk, crawl, kneel, reach.

Environmental Demands: Both inside and outside work. Potential hazardous work conditions. Ability to tolerate heat, inclement weather (rain, cold, humidity), water, odors, dust, poor ventilation, fumes, toxic fumes.

Mental Demands: Ability to read and comprehend professional, technical and scientific journals, manuals and procedures; safety instructions, memos, letters, policies, and reports. Ability to perform shop math and general mathematical functions. Ability to write summaries and reports. Ability to speak clearly and concisely relating information, data and details to layman; conversant in theory and practices of discipline.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E  
**VOLUNTEER EMS RESCUE**

**CODES/PAY RANGE**

Class Code: 3911

EEO Code: D

Pay Range: Non-Salaried Position

**MAJOR FUNCTION**

General delivery of emergency medical and rescue services; and in maintaining division equipment and facilities.

**ILLUSTRATIVE DUTIES**

(NOTE: These are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related, or a logical assignment to the position.)

Responds to fire alarms with fire company. Assists in rescuing people from burning buildings or other hazardous locations. Renders first aid when needed.

Receives fire alarms by telephone, radio or industrial alarm systems, and other emergency calls. Ascertains the nature of the fire or emergency, its location, and dispatches necessary personnel and equipment to the scene.

Performs rehabilitative functions and provides treatment for injured or ill firefighters or citizens at the scene of emergencies.

Performs overall operations as needed at all fire, rescue and emergency scenes.

Performs general maintenance work in the upkeep of division facilities. Cleans and washes walls and floors. Makes minor repairs to facilities and equipment. Washes, hangs, and dries hose. Washes, cleans, repairs, polishes, and tests apparatus. Performs tests on automated external defibrillators, oxygen delivery equipment, and other EMS related equipment.

Attends company drills and scheduled in-service training exercises. Participates as required in all drills and training sessions involving both practical and classroom applications. Keeps current and up to date in all phases of job responsibilities through seminars and college courses.

Writes EMS Run Reports and patient documentation reports upon returning to station after treating sick or injured parties.

Performs related work as required.

**KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND SKILLS**

Knowledge of first aid methods. Knowledge of the street system and geography of the County.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with associates and the public. Ability to understand and follow oral and written instructions. Ability to perform prolonged and arduous work under adverse conditions. Ability to learn a wide variety of firefighting duties and methods within a reasonable training period.

Coordination and physical strength sufficient to pass a physical ability test.

### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Graduation from high school or possession of a GED. Must meet the minimum requirements set forth by the State of Florida as having completed the basic First Responder training course or other advanced medical training curriculum and possess a certification/licensure showing successful completion.

Additional qualifications determine pay grade assignment:

Possess and maintain Florida State Certification as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Possess and maintain Florida State Certification as a Paramedic.

Possession of a valid Florida commercial license, Class D with an E exemption. Must successfully pass rigid physical examination including drug screening.

A comparable amount of education, training, or experience may be substituted for the minimum qualifications.

### ADA REQUIREMENTS

Physical Demands: Heavy to very heavy work. Ability to see, hear, talk, lift (100 lbs.), carry, push, stand, climb, crouch, balance, handle, fingering, pull, walk, crawl, kneel, reach.

Environmental Demands: Both inside and outside work. Potential hazardous work conditions. Ability to tolerate heat, inclement weather (rain, cold, humidity), water, odors, dust, poor ventilation, fumes, toxic fumes.

Mental Demands: Ability to read and comprehend professional, technical and scientific journals, manuals and procedures; safety instructions, memos, letters, policies, and reports. Ability to perform shop math and general mathematical functions. Ability to write summaries and reports. Ability to speak clearly and concisely relating information, data and details to layman; conversant in theory and practices of discipline.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F**  
**VOLUSIA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICES**  
**RECOMMENDED STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**

<b>VOLUME:</b> II <b>GUIDELINE:</b> 108.000	<b>SUBJECT:</b> VOLUNTEER IN TRAINING MENTOR PROGRAM
<b>REFERENCE:</b> N/A	<b>ISSUING AUTHORITY:</b> FIRE SERVICES DIRECTOR  JAMES G. TAUBER
<b>__ RESCINDS:</b> N/A <b>__ AMENDS:</b> N/A	<b>DATE ISSUED:</b>
	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> JANUARY 1, 2008

**I. PURPOSE:**

Anytime a volunteer firefighter feels they need assistance with specific training requirements for completion of their Volunteer Firefighter I, it is the responsibility of the employee or member to make arrangements with their assigned station mentor or notify the Training Division, Division Chief assigned oversight for the Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Academy. The Division Chief will then notify the volunteer members assigned station mentor if needed.

**II. POLICY:**

It is the policy of VCFS that firefighter/field personnel follow the "VOLUNTEER IN TRAINING MENTOR PROGRAM" Procedures outlined below.

**III. RESPONSIBILITY:**

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Chief of Operations to review and update this guideline.

**IV. PROCEDURE:**

A. Schedule a weekly meeting with the assigned station mentor:

As part of the meeting, the following requirements for each drill are to include:

- A review of the probationary volunteers assigned protective equipment, conducted for a safety inspection to protect the member from any potential injuries due to defective or worn personal protective equipment.
- A predetermined practical activity, of which the employee or member has engaged in over the last week with in the Volunteer Academy during their regularly scheduled training sessions, i.e., donning and doffing of a self-contained breathing apparatus, knot tying, etc.
- A comprehensive review of the volunteer candidates assigned study notes and classroom workbook. This is done to determine if there are any concerns focused on the academic side of the Volunteer Academy.
- A one-on-one discussion on any issues or concerns the volunteer member may have i.e., scheduling issues, performance concerns, etc. If any issues are found, a development plan is put together at this meeting.

**Appendix G**  
**VOLUSIA COUNTY FIRE SERVICES**  
**EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**Please return to: Volunteer Manager**

<b>EMPLOYEE DETAIL</b> <i>(To be completed prior to interview)</i>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	
<b>Department/Team</b>	
<b>Position</b>	
<b>Time in position</b>	
<b>REASONS FOR LEAVING</b>	
<b>Why are you leaving?</b>	
<b>Does the location of the job have any bearing on your decision to leave?</b>	
<b>WHAT NEXT?</b>	
<b>What are you going to do?</b>	
<b>If Volunteering, what sort of job and at what level?</b>	
<b>If Volunteering elsewhere, what attracted you to your new job?</b>	
<b>If volunteer employment, who will be your new employer?</b>	
<b>How does your new volunteer job differ from your current one?</b>	
<b>How different will your benefits be and in what way?</b>	

<b>REGARDING VCFS</b>	
Do you feel the description of your job was accurate?	
Did you find that your role and responsibilities were clearly understood?	
Could your qualifications or skills have been used to better advantage? How?	
Did you feel you received appropriate support to enable you to do your job?	
Was the training you received at VCFS adequate to enable you to do your job?	
Is there any additional training you think VCFS should be offering new employees?	
What did you see as your prospects with VCFS?	
How was your working environment?	
Are there any changes to VCFS' practices that you would like to recommend?	
Do you feel that VCFS implements its volunteer policies fairly and equitably?	
Are there any other issues you wish to share?	

Signed: .....

Date: .....

This is an example of the recommended volunteer application and agreement for Fire Services to utilize as part of their recruitment and risk management recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

### Appendix H

## **Volusia County Fire Services VOLUNTEER APPLICATION / Agreement**

Applicant (Last Name, First Name, Middle Initial) Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Include Apartment Number) \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Drivers License Number \_\_\_\_\_

### **In Case of Emergency, Please Contact:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relation: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### **References (Optional):**

1 – Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a first degree misdemeanor or felony in any state or country?  
YES\_ NO \_

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of child abuse, molestation, or a sex offense? YES \_ NO \_

If your answer is "YES" to either question, please list the dates and jurisdictions of prior arrests or convictions:

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Terms and Conditions:**

Volunteers are covered by state liability protection (Chapter 768.28 FS) and by workers compensation (Chapter 440 FS). No other benefits or collective bargaining agreements shall apply. Volunteers shall comply with all applicable County Department and Division rules. Volunteers are not considered employees of the County and service as a volunteer is at will. The undersigned may be discharged as a volunteer without cause by Department or Division staff. This agreement may be cancelled at any time following notice by either party. By signing this application, I hereby acknowledge that and agree to the terms and conditions cited herein and authorize the Division of Public Protection and Fire Services to verify the above information and conduct a criminal history background check on me at any time during my service as a volunteer. I have read and been given a copy of the Volusia County Fire Services Volunteer Standard Operating Guidelines, 104.003. All statements contained herein are true and correct.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

Acceptance Date \_\_\_\_\_

Available all year: \_ Yes \_ No Seasonal: \_ Yes \_ No Student: \_ Yes \_ No

Do you have any allergies, health problems or limitations that we should know about? \_ Yes \_ No

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Source: Adopted from Volusia County Government hold harmless agreements and volunteer application, 2007



If yes please list:

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### **EXPERIENCE & INTERESTS**

Tell us about yourself. Please describe your background (educational and professional, including any special hobbies, interests, or skills) that may apply to your volunteer service with the County of Volusia:

#### ***Check any or all that apply: Skills & Interests***

##### **Graphic & Visual Arts**

Desktop Publishing \_ \_

Design / Illustration \_ \_

Photography \_ \_

Writing / Editing \_ \_

##### **Operations & Resources**

Environmental Education \_ \_

Resource Management \_ \_

Special Events / Projects \_ \_

##### **Trades**

Carpentry \_ \_

Construction –

Structural/ Trails \_ \_

Electrical \_ \_

Trail Maintenance \_ \_

Painting \_ \_

##### **Other (Specify)**

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##### **Education**

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##### **Current Occupation**

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##### **Experience**

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##### **Certifications, qualifications, skills:**

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##### **Hobbies and interest:**

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##### **Your goals of volunteer service:**

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*Thank you for your interest in Volusia County Fire Services.*

**Please return completed Volunteer Application/Agreement and signed Release Form to:  
Volunteer Manager, Volusia County Fire Services 125 W Indiana Avenue, DeLand, Florida 32720  
Fax# 386-736-5064 For more info: (386) 736-5276**

**VOLUSIA COUNTY FIRE SERVICES RECRUIT/PARTICIPANT RELEASE OF LIABILITY  
- READ BEFORE SIGNING-**

In consideration of being allowed to attend and participate in any way in the County of Volusia's sponsored activities and related programs and events, I agree that:

1. The risk of injury from attendance at the participation in sponsored activities is significant, include for permanent disability and death, and while particular rules, equipment, and personal discipline may reduce this risk, the risk of serious injury to me does exist; and,

2. **I KNOWINGLY AND FREELY ASSUME ALL SUCH RISKS, BOTH KNOWN AND UNKNOWN, EVEN IF ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES** or others, and assume fully responsibility for my attendance or my attendance and participation; and,

3. I agree to comply with the stated and customary terms and conditions for attendance and participation. If I observe any unusual significant concern in my attendance or readiness for participation and/or in the sponsored activity itself, I will remove my self from the sponsored activity and bring my concern to the attention of the nearest division employee immediately; and

4. I, for myself, and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, **HEREBY RELEASE THE COUNTY OF VOLUSIA, other participants, sponsoring agencies**, sponsors, advertisers and owners and lessors of the premises used to conduct the sponsored activities, their officials, officers, employees and/or agents ("Releasees"), **WITH RESPECT TO ANY AND ALL INJURY, DISABILITY, DEATH** or loss or damage to person or property incident to my or my child's attendance at or participation in sponsored activities,

**WHETHER ARISING FROM THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASEES OR OTHERWISE**, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

5. I, for myself and on behalf of my heirs, assigns, personal representatives and next of kin, **HEREBY INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS** all the above Releasees from any and all liabilities incident to my involvement or participation in sponsored activities, **EVEN IF ARISING FROM THEIR NEGLIGENCE**, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

**I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AGREEMENT, FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS TERMS, UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN UP SUBSTANTIAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT, AND SIGN IT FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT.**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

