



Frequently Asked Questions Becoming A Big Lake Firefighter

Q: Do I need to have special schooling or a degree to be a Big Lake firefighter?

Experience is not needed. Once hired, all recruits go through a local academy where they receive all required training and certifications to be firefighters.

Q: Where is the academy held?

One academy is with our mutual aid partner at the Elk River Fire Academy, we also utilize a local company who allows us to train in Big Lake and at surrounding communities.

Q: Is the Big Lake Fire Department volunteer or paid-on-call?

Big Lake Fire is a paid-on-call department meaning that firefighters are compensated for attending calls for service, training, meetings, work details, etc. Firefighters are issued pagers that alert them to calls for service, they then respond to the station from wherever they are (home, work, etc.).

Q: What is the time commitment for the Fire Academy?

Once hired, all recruits must attend the academy to obtain required training and certifications. The Academy consists of approximately 160 hours of both hands-on and classroom training covering a multitude of topics. Classes are generally held every Monday and Wednesday evening from 1800 hours - 2200 hours, with a few Saturday all-day classes. A full schedule will be provided on the first evening of class and is subject to change depending on staffing and scheduling.

Q: Do I have to live in Big Lake to be an BLFD firefighter?

Yes. To ensure adequate response times, all Big Lake firefighters must live within 7 miles of the Big Lake Fire Station.

Q: Is there any training besides the Fire Academy?

Big Lake firefighters have additional training the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month at 1800 hours. There is also required monthly online training that can be completed whenever is convenient for the firefighter.

Q: Do I have to respond to every single call for service that's dispatched?

Per our guidelines, firefighters are required to attend a minimum of 25% of all calls dispatched per year. Failure to meet this minimum requirement may result in discipline. Big Lake Fire currently responds to an average of 340 calls per year.

Q: Do men and women have equal requirements for entry and training?

Yes - men and women both go through the same pre-employment screenings (physical agility assessment, medical evaluation, psychological evaluation, and background check). Big Lake is an equal opportunity employer.

Q: Is there a cost for the required Firefighter/First Responder training?

There is no out-of-pocket cost to recruits. All training expenses and hours are paid for by the Big Lake Fire Department.

Q: Are there any volunteer opportunities with Big Lake Fire?

At this time, we do not have any volunteer opportunities available (i.e. washing trucks, cleaning the station, etc.).

Q: Do firefighters have to stay at the stations?

Big Lake Fire is a paid-on-call department, meaning that firefighters respond to the station when they are paged for calls. Firefighters remain at the station for the duration of the call until they are cleared.

Q: What is a Paid-On-Call Firefighter?

A Paid-On-Call firefighter is a paid person employed by a fire and rescue service who is 'on call' to respond to a range of emergencies and to engage with their community. They have everyday lives and jobs, until their pager sounds - then they become professional firefighters. The work may be called 'part-time', but on-call firefighters are trained and experienced people on the front line, saving lives and protecting people and community assets. On-call firefighters are paid for their services, they receive thorough training and learn all they need to know about emergency situations as well as additional personal skills. Paid-On-Call firefighters come from all areas of the community. For example, they could be men and women who are at home, in full or part-time employment, working for themselves, or not currently employed. They are exceptional people who give their time to assist the fire and rescue service and help protect their communities.