

Welcome to the Nederland Fire Protection District



WELCOME

Welcome. We are excited that you have shown interest in becoming a member of the Nederland Fire Protection District. This orientation letter should answer many of your initial questions regarding the Fire District and help define what we are about. You are now involved with an organization rich in a heritage of dedication, unselfish sacrifice, and inspired human action. The fire service is one of the most honored civilian occupations. A survey has disclosed that there are approximately 24,000 fire departments in the U.S. The survey further reveals that nearly 22,000 are volunteer departments or “combination” departments, the remaining 2,000 are career departments. As you can see, volunteers carry out a majority of the firefighting work in this nation. Thank you for stepping forward to help with this awesome task.

WHAT WE ARE

NFPD is a fire protection district, a form of local government that derives most of its revenues from property taxes of area property owners. In addition we receive grants, donations, and have fundraisers. An elected Board of Directors governs the District, with a paid chief responsible for the administration of the Department. The chief reports directly to this Board of Directors. The Fire District is separate from town government, their budget and areas of authority. We do, however, work closely with the Town of Nederland regarding fire code enforcement, future development, and public safety.

WHO WE ARE

We are a group of individuals who come together to save lives, reduce pain and suffering, and mitigate property and environmental damage from fires and other disturbances. Commonly we help others when they do not know who else to call. The Department is made up of very different individuals, each bringing his or her own special combination of training, experience, personality, and desires. As a group we are committed to achieve the common goals of providing emergency services and to increase public safety.

PROFESSIONAL vs. VOLUNTEER

As a volunteer you are uncompensated for the work that you will perform. A career firefighter is someone who is compensated for his or her firefighting efforts. Professionalism is best used to describe our demeanor, skill set and performance. The chest pain patient expects professionalism regardless of your compensation status. When we are fighting a structure fire we cannot be content to say we are only volunteers. Our safety and success will depend on our skills and training being equal to or greater than those of our career counterparts.

WHAT WE DO

The NFPD is given its authority to operate according to the Colorado Revised Statutes, which specifically outlines our responsibilities and authorities. We are primarily responsible for the suppression of structural and wildland fires within our District, the provision of emergency medical services, and other rescue activities as permitted.

Within Boulder County there are several organizations that specialize in various technical rescue areas. Due to our somewhat remote location NFPD performs certain aspects of these at a first response level. This would include ice rescue, low angle rope rescue, and initial backcountry emergency medical response to injured hikers and climbers. It is common for those with extensive outdoor background to inquire why we do not perform high angle rope rescue or backcountry evacuations. While we will assist on these types of missions, it must be clear that our primary job is to provide emergency medical response and fire suppression to our District. Overextending our resources into an area where we cannot maintain proficiency or that will leave our district "empty" of responders is not in keeping with our customer's best interests.

WHAT TO EXPECT

For the time period of 2000 - 2009 we have run approximately 300 calls per year. The calls generally break down as follows:

60-70%	Emergency Medical Services - including MVA's, rescues, etc
1-5	Structure fires
1-10	Wildland fires- private land or mutual aid to the Forest Service or others
Numerous	"Smoke Reports and Illegal campfires"
1-10	Fatalities - either MVA's, suicides or natural causes
10-20	Rollover motor vehicle accidents
6-8	Wires down
5-10	False building alarms
5	Carbon monoxide alarms
5	Odor in the area
1	Fallen climbers
2	Gas flushes/Hazmat calls
3	Landing zone support
1	Dog in the ice, avalanche or similar

You can see that we respond to an incredible variety of incidents, each requiring its own set of skills. You will need to commit to lifelong learning in the fire service. That's part of the bottom line here: you will constantly need to seek more training and be responsible for your growth as a firefighter. The day you think you know it all, or that this is just a routine call, is most likely the day you will hurt yourself or someone else.

A significant portion of our time is spent supporting special events: 4th of July, Frozen Dead Guy Days, the Neder-Nederland running race and many more. Members are expected to assist and provide coverage for these special events.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

As the demand for our services grows, we will see an increase in the types and level of services we provide and an increase in the complexity of equipment that we use to provide these services. In the future we will likely see a transition to a combination department. Some members will be paid to be on shift for fire and EMS calls during periods of low availability, while others will maintain the rich tradition of volunteerism.

ORGANIZATION

Due to the complexities of our organization and the type of incidents to which we respond, significant emphasis is placed on our organizational structure. Internally we have officer positions, which are associated with specific responsibilities, lines of reporting and specialization. Collectively this is referred to as “Chain of Command.” The implication is that a member will address issues with a less senior officer of the Department who will correct the problem or “bump” the issue up the chain of command to a more senior officer. Ultimately the Chief will be responsible for correction of issues that other officers have not resolved. This structure is designed to prevent duplication of effort, maintain effective discipline, and increase overall efficiency of the Department. Although semi-militaristic in nature, it is an effective method in managing complex resources and situations.

Current officer positions are: Chief, Assistant Chief, Division Chiefs, Captains and Lieutenants. These are commonly referred to as “C” or command positions, i.e., C-1 through C-9 indicating position and sometimes rank. For example, “C-2” is commonly an Assistant or Division Chief in the fire service. These officers are responsible for commanding incident scenes, directing activities and providing for member and civilian safety.

In the fire service it is common courtesy to use titles when addressing officers, out of respect for the rank and office. We are rather informal but it must be remembered that officers are to be given the respect that they have worked hard to obtain.

OWNERSHIP

The Department is committed to meeting our customer’s expectations. Part of this is the concept of “ownership.” Therefore, if you know about a problem you “OWN IT” until you either resolve it or can find someone who can. Externally this would include cats stuck in trees, broken water pipes, and many other “problems” that exceed our normal scope. Internally this includes broken equipment, trucks out of gas, full trash cans, etc.

EMERGENCY CALL RECEIPT AND NOTIFICATION

We are dispatched from the Boulder Regional Communications Center located East of the Jail off of Valmont Road. This is an E-911 public safety answering point, which then notifies appropriate agencies of incidents via pagers and packset “emergency tones.” When communicating with dispatch via radio we will typically use dispatch, communications or “1800” as their call sign.

TYPICAL EMERGENCY CALL RESPONSE

Pre-Call equipment Preparation	Maintain personal protective equipment, apparatus, and equipment in constant state of readiness.
Tone	Receive notification of incident via pager or packset.
POV response	Respond to appropriate station in personal vehicle, utilizing emergency warning devices as necessary, remember that you are requesting right-of-way and that public safety is your primary concern.
Station Arrival	Ensure that the correct location and nature of call is known. Determine best access, don personal protective equipment, board vehicles as directed by officers or as dictated by standard emergency response guidelines.
En-route	Respond to scene with due regard for public safety, consider access, potential resource needs, weather, and size-up criteria.
Arrival	Position apparatus for safety, establish command, perform scene size-up, communicate safety concerns, develop tactical plan .
Emergency Activity	Perform activities as directed by officers, maintain safety awareness. Do not freelance!
Demobilization	At the completion of assigned tasks, return equipment to appropriate location, promptly return to service any unneeded resources.
Return to Quarters	Return to quarters, re-fill fuel and water as needed, maintain alertness for safety and potential for other calls.
In Quarters	Clean, maintain and repair equipment, replace disposable supplies, document repair needs, and complete paper work and run sheets.

Call review Perform incident critique, identifying successes, safety concerns, and areas for potential training and improvement.

DISTRICT BOUDARIES

Our district comprises 212 square miles; the approximate boundaries are as follows:

- North** - Hwy 119 & Sugarloaf Road: Sugarloaf and Nederland FPD respond jointly to the Western portion of Sugarloaf Road.
- South** - Hwy 72 & Magnolia road: The Western portion is in our district, the Eastern portion is covered by High Country FPD.
- East** - The 32 mile marker of Boulder Canyon is normally used, to the north Comforter Mountain is within our District boundaries.
- West** - The Pacific Continental Divide defines our Western Boundary; commonly we mutual aid with USFS resources and Rocky Mountain Rescue in this area.

SAFETY

Firefighting is commonly considered one of the most dangerous occupations available.

Safety is our specialty. When performing activities each of us must evaluate:

- 1) What is at stake - life, property, equipment or a routine task?
- 2) Am I willing to risk what is needed to succeed at this activity ?
- 3) Does the risk of this activity exceed the possible benefit ?
- 4) Can this activity be done in a safer way ?
- 5) Am I using ALL available safety and protective equipment ?

Therefore, use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when needed. This includes earplugs, safety glasses, gloves, and other items when performing routine tasks. You are responsible for your personal safety, the safety of those around you and the safety of the Department's equipment. Unsafe actions will jeopardize the trust of your peers and your ability to function on the department.

SEATBELTS are always to be worn when in NFPD vehicles and in your personal vehicles. If you are unable to comply with this, we will need to evaluate your judgment and your desire to be a member of NFPD.

SAFETY AROUND FIRE APPARATUS

The process of moving, manipulating, spotting, or otherwise parking Department apparatus has certain inherent dangers. Pay attention. Behave safely. Take care of your teammates and yourself. Firefighters should practice care and caution around vehicles. Stepping from behind or between when unseen is dangerous. Firefighters should occupy predetermined safe places on vehicles while riding. Prior to any or all movements of fire vehicles, personnel should be in position, strapped in with safety belts. The driver should not move until this is accomplished. Firefighters should not get on or off moving vehicles.

Fire apparatus should be backed with the aid of a spotter. Firefighters should be fully clothed in protective bunker gear or EMT jumpsuits when:

1. Responding to or operating at the scene of an emergency
2. Operating under emergency status
3. Standing by for emergency operations
4. During drills and training operations

FIREGROUND SAFETY AND CONDUCT

1. Firefighters should not either jokingly or maliciously turn a stream of water upon any person or cause it to be directed upon or into any premises unnecessarily.
2. Debris should not be thrown from any height at fire scenes unless essential to the extinguishment of the fire.
3. When it is necessary to throw debris, it must be known that falling material will do no damage or cause injury to anyone below. Communications to ground crews is essential.
4. When entering smoke-filled buildings, use Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus and be accompanied by a partner.
5. Firefighters should be aware of all activities at emergency scenes and not work in opposition to them.
6. All tools, appliances, and parts of apparatus should be in assigned places when not in use.
7. Firefighters should remain with respective vehicles until directed otherwise.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS & OTHER IMPAIRMENTS

As a Department member you cannot safely perform emergency work in uncontrolled situations when you are impaired by alcohol, drugs, illness or other factors. Neither the District or it's officers want the liability associated with impaired responders. For volunteers it is not uncommon to receive a call while having a drink with dinner. In these situations you will need to determine if you are impaired and if you can safely respond to and operate at an emergency scene. Equally important is the public image that you will portray as a member of NFPD. It is inappropriate to go out for a night of drinking while wearing an NFPD T-shirt. Clearly if you are observed to be impaired at meetings, trainings or calls departmental policy will be followed with discipline up to and including immediate termination. If further clarification is required ask your officers.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

The better shape you are in, the easier and safer it will be for you to complete most tasks. We go from 0 - 100 in several minutes, perform exhausting tasks in environmental extremes with heavy equipment under incredible emotional burdens. Heart attacks are one of the leading causes of firefighter deaths. This is largely due to the conditions described above. Firefighting can be incredibly strenuous, it is best to perform cardiovascular and strength training,

eat a healthy diet, don't smoke, and use personal protective equipment to lessen our risk of injury or disease.

COMMUNICATIONS

Poor communications has been identified as the cause of many needless firefighter injuries and fatalities. On scene you will need to communicate that which is vital and to eliminate that which is not. Internally much of the strife that our department experiences is due to poor interpersonal communications. It is your task to develop good communications skills. These will include being concise, relaying important information and minimizing personal bias. If you are experiencing conflict with another member, take the issue to them. Frequently these issues are a result of poorly communicated expectations or information.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Take issues only to those affected. If you are unsuccessful in dealing with an issue directly, take it to an officer. Rumor mongering, griping behind someone's back and the like will do little to resolve the issue and will most likely damage morale. We need to work as a team, which means we must resolve conflict graciously and effectively.

COMMITMENT

It is critical for applicants, candidates, and full members to regularly attend meetings, trainings, work sessions, and calls. It is the combination of personal knowledge (acquired through regular training), teamwork and equipment readiness that will allow us to operate safely with the best possible call outcome. If we do not maintain our training or equipment we will set ourselves up for failure, perhaps at the cost of our own or someone else's life. As a new applicant or candidate it is essential that you "do your time" in the beginning to learn our trade. This means regular attendance at trainings and meetings, and going to the stations on your own to learn the trucks and equipment.

With that said, you need to take care of home FIRST. That means if you have obligations to your family or job that conflict with your participation with NFPD, we will need to "work things out". Occasional absences from trainings are expected, but regrettable, due to the information that you will miss. It is frustrating to have a problem on a scene where the comment will be "How could they have not known how to do that? We just went over it last week." The occasional "Powder Day, Bike Ride, I needed to work at home" is ok. However, too many of these absences prevent you from being a safe and effective member of the team.

PUBLIC IMAGE

Maintain a good image in the community. Keep personal affairs in such an order that they will not embarrass the Department or yourself if known publicly. The public has a view of the firefighter as fitting an image created by tradition: a

good neighbor, a hero, a person of virtue, one willing to help. Do not damage the trust that the public has placed in us by inappropriate behavior.

The departmental clothing that we wear identifies us as a member of the department. The activities that we participate in while wearing department clothing will be identified with the Department. Firefighters should remember that a careless “roll of the eyes” or inappropriate comment may damage the reputation that many have worked hard to achieve. Boisterous, profane, or abusive language should be avoided at emergency scenes and in all radio communications.

CRITIQUE

Although designed to improve future performance, critical input is sometimes hard to take. In the fire service you will learn to constantly critique your performance. Consequently, officers will critique how the call could have gone better and your relative contribution to that. Graciously accept input as a sign that others want you to succeed. On occasion we will be our own worst critics. It is important to learn from our mistakes, without being so sensitive that we are unable to continue performing or able to learn new tasks.

TEAMWORK

Firefighting is a team sport, as are emergency medical services, rescue, and other related activities. To get the job done properly, safely, quickly, and to save time on some decision making, the Department has certain basic pre-planned emergency procedures (General Operating Guidelines) such as communication procedures, hose lays, ladder procedures, building entry techniques, emergency medical procedures, etc. Most of these require group or team action.

The precision of these actions requires teamwork, the united efforts of individuals working together to accomplish a task that is important to the total operation. To work together under conditions where the safety of one member is dependent upon the actions of another member requires teamwork. Accomplishing the goals of your job requires teamwork. How the emergency is resolved will depend upon teamwork.

Every good team has confidence. Confidence is belief in yourself and in your team. Training as a team will develop confidence. The strength of the team is the combined strength of each firefighter on the team. Team spirit is the enthusiasm developed through satisfactory teamwork. How you function to relieve an emergency will be based on your ability as a part of a team. Do not resent correction and criticism from leadership. If you are criticized, it may be because you are a member of the team and others see great potential in your developing abilities. Everyone must work for a common end, the saving of lives and the prevention of fires. Realize you are not just a team member, you have ownership of this team, it is up to each of us to make this team function. Your contribution is important to its proper function. This means every member must obey the formulated orders and plans.

TEAMWORK IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

1. All members must have a common desire for a successful team.
2. Each member must contribute to the team.
3. Members must communicate and coordinate with each other.
4. Members should know their job functions, the job functions of teammates and their importance within the operation so they may supplement each other as teammates.
5. All members must drill and participate to assure precision and quickness in operations.

HONESTY & CONDUCT

You are entering into a field that is highly respected. We are given free reign of other people's homes and lives in many situations. We take care of their children, parents, pets, homes, cars and belongings. Rarely are others afforded this privilege and responsibility. As a result personal conduct is an important aspect of being a member of NFPD. A criminal background check will be performed as part of your application process. In addition, you will need to provide the department with a copy of your motor vehicle driving record. Though minor violations are most likely not an issue, DUI's and other serious offenses are inconsistent with valuing other's safety and property or a proper departmental image.

STEALING

It is important to remember that the Department's equipment belongs to the taxpayers, and it is our job to take care of it. Do not steal (acquire, long term borrow, convert to personal property, obtain, or similar euphemisms) Departmental or other's property. There is nothing more frustrating than to have departmental or personal equipment taken by those to whom you have entrusted your life. To avoid the appearance of theft, do not borrow equipment without authorization from an officer. Equipment must be returned promptly and in good repair. Obviously if you cannot be trusted with other's property we cannot trust you to be on the Department.

PRIVILEGED INFORMATION

Due to the nature of our activities we will be privy to information unavailable to the general public. This will include medical patient information, law enforcement details, building or water system details, information regarding crime and fire scenes, member data or other "sensitive" information. Station combinations, computer passwords, and other similar information must also be protected.

It is common to vent after certain calls; this is what our peers at the fire department are for, do not discuss sensitive details with friends or family. Nederland is a small community, where everyone knows a friend of someone; we are bound by law to protect confidential information. Specific to fire scenes, firefighters should make no comment or mention of any of the following information except to the officer in charge:

- Cause of fire and/or evidence of such, whether fire is suspicious in origin
- Location or names of bodies or victims, location of valuables
- Opinion of loss estimate
- Other sensitive information

The Chief of the Department must authorize any release of information to the press or public. Do not discuss the above items or other details with the press. Do report important details to your officers, but do not gossip. We must carefully maintain the trust of the public by keeping their privileged information private. Idle talk may jeopardize investigations or our public reputation, carefully monitor your informal post-call debriefings.

DAMAGED EQUIPMENT

It is inevitable that you will at some point damage a vehicle or equipment. Immediately report the damage to an officer, fill out the appropriate paper work, and help repair the damage or obtain a comparable device. Equally important is to evaluate how this damage could have been prevented. It is vital that we promptly repair damaged equipment or apparatus as soon as possible. During the “down time” we may be missing a critical piece of equipment that we may desperately need on a call. In most cases you will receive the badgering of your peers and not much else.

While reducing emphasis on punitive actions regarding damaging equipment and apparatus, it is important to recognize that damaged equipment is poor stewardship.

Coordinating equipment or apparatus repairs requires enormous effort to complete: money, time to take and pick up repaired items, removing or placing equipment back in service, scheduling time, paperwork and other efforts all which could be better spent.

EXPECTATION OF NFPD PERSONNEL

Persons on all levels of the Department should be aware that there is more involved in joining the Department than attending meetings and responding to calls.

1. The NFPD involves maintenance and work, which all persons are expected to perform.
2. Attend meetings, practices, and work sessions.
3. Put in an additional 1-2 (or more) hours per week for other work.
4. Complete additional work assignments from the Chief or other officers.
5. Respond on calls as per response procedures (GOGs).
6. Read and understand GOGs as well as policies and rules and regulations.
7. Progress in the Department by increasing your level of training and experience.
8. Never respond on calls or report to meetings or practices while under the influence of intoxicating liquor, drugs, or chemicals.

9. Exercise precautionary measures to avoid injuries to yourself and/or to others.

THE VOLUNTEER APPLICANT PROCESS

Once approved, an applicant does the following:

- 1) Attends all meetings (7 p.m. the second and fourth Thursdays of each month and the Saturdays that follow those Thursdays) and work sessions as assigned and scheduled.
- 2) Performs duties as assigned by the Chief or any other officer.
- 3) Maintains a good image in the community.
- 4) Is tested on the content of the orientation letter, GOGLs, policies, and rules and regulations of the Department by the Board of Review. After satisfactory completion of applicant phase and approval by the Board of Review, the applicant is advanced to candidate status.

The candidate does the following:

1. Attends meetings, practices, and work parties.
2. Receives additional training material
3. Performs duties assigned by the Chief or by any other officer.
4. Maintains a good image in the community.
5. Is tested on hands-on training, training films, basic knowledge of truck functions, basic knowledge of communication procedures.
6. Is subject to a Board of Review. After satisfactory completion of requirements of a candidate and approval by the Board of Review. The duties of a member firefighter are outlined in the policy manual.

ADVANCEMENT

Firefighters gain recognition and promotion through the merits of their own achievements. Your progress is “up to you,” meaning that the time you put in will directly affect the quality of the member that you are to become. All NFPD members are willing to assist in your training and development and are sincerely interested in you becoming a safe and effective team member. Our help is there for the asking. The important factors in evaluating your performance as a volunteer firefighter are the training you have had and your ability and willingness to serve.

CHALLENGES

We respond to “emergencies” which are situations, typically reported to 911, that exceed that person’s ability to manage. These may be perceived emergencies or true emergencies. We are expected to “handle” what others can’t or won’t. Over time you will develop the skills necessary to do this. These emergencies may be a cat stuck on a pole or a truly grotesque injury or death, perhaps with the added challenge of being personally familiar with the injured or deceased party. We will deal with people on the worst days of their lives; they may yell at us, curse us and spit at us, perhaps they will even try to kill us. On other days people will show us gratitude that few people deserve or

receive. It is our actions and attitudes that will shape our victims memories of these incidents. Naturally you are here as a result of your desire to help others. It is important to remember that this “attitude of service” must be maintained even when dealing with difficult people, performing routine (boring) maintenance tasks, or attending trainings when you would rather be somewhere else.

Sometime during your membership you will be exposed to an event that will emotionally or psychologically exceed anything you have ever experienced. As a Department we are linked by a common bond; the goal to serve others. We learn each other’s strengths and weakness by working together. You will learn to emotionally support and be supported by those around you. When the day comes when you can’t sleep because of that “lousy call” or are afraid to run another motorcycle accident, let those around you know. Notify your officers; critical incident stress debriefings are commonly used as a way of working through some of those terrifying emotions. On the up side, they say “what doesn’t kill us, makes us stronger.” Most likely over time you will learn how to protect yourself emotionally on the job.

SUMMARY

You are entering into a noble endeavor; few people will appreciate the time, effort, rewards, and challenges you will face. We must be prepared physically, emotionally, and intellectually. We must keep our equipment and ourselves in the highest state of readiness. Safety, customer satisfaction, and “How can I make this better?” will be on the forefront of our thoughts. Much of our success will hinge on how effectively we communicate with each other and our customers. Thank you for your interest in NFPD and the safety of our community.