



# **Stayton Fire District's Retention Plan**

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### **Recruitment/Retention Coordinator**

The coordinator will maintain the operating retention plan for the duration of the grant unless otherwise directed by the Chief. Year round recruiting and retention efforts will be a part of the District's long term success by bringing in new members and encouraging existing members to stay active in the department. The recruit and retention coordinator will use the retention plan as a guideline to maximize existing materials, but will evaluate successes and failures of the plan on an ongoing basis and make changes and amendments as necessary. The plan is specifically designed to be openly evaluated as are the different programs adopted to support retention efforts. Both successes and failures of those plans will be documented for future review and evaluation to help understand why some programs may have worked, and why others did not. Since this plan will be under constant review, changes may be updated before plans are officially in place, and some plans may be discontinued before officially removed from this plan.

A constant theme for the coordinator position will be the research and implementation of new recruiting and retention concepts. The documentation of the successes/failures of these ideas and their implementation will be critical for their immediate and future uses. Successful ideas and techniques will be implemented into their respective plans. Based on personal interviews, feedback, exit interviews, and outside perspective, we will make every effort to evaluate our current plan and ensure that it is adapting as needed to meet the ever changing needs of the district.

An additional theme for the coordinator will be to communicate constantly with all firefighters, officers and support staff to evaluate how satisfied they are with their volunteer experience. Periodic surveys will be conducted to isolate possible retention issues within the District, as well as provide the volunteers with the opportunity to provide feedback for ways the District can improve the volunteering efforts. All of these results will be made available to the respective chief officers for use at their discretion.

### **Current Retention Issues**

In looking at our length of service data, we recognize certain points of significant attrition occurring between 5-11 months, 2-3 years and again around 5 years. After conducting member surveys and exit interviews for past members we learned that the members that left after several years of service quit because of lifestyle changes (moved, job change, family change) while members that left before the end of their probationary period left because they didn't understand the expectations of membership when they joined or became frustrated by a lack of direction. Others voiced concern regarding not being utilized, or being bored while on shift. It is the Districts goal to provide a clear explanation of the duties expected by the District, and in return a clear plan for their success and support throughout their fire service career.

### **General Retention Themes**

As we address retention at the Stayton Fire District, a methodical approach will be utilized to focus on key critical stages in the life of a volunteer firefighter. Different ideas, strategies and benchmarks will be discussed to ensure that the past, present and future volunteers of Stayton Fire feel like they are an active involved part of the District. As we go through the different phases of a volunteer's lifespan, several items specific to that timeframe will be discussed. Retention lies not only in incentives and perks, but in a culture and atmosphere of respect, accountability and professionalism. These universal themes will be carried out at all levels of the District. The plan relies heavily on increased communication within the District, officer level training and a District-wide culture of continuing education. It is important to understand that retention is critical in the beginning of a volunteer's career, but equally important as those volunteers become more experienced and want to learn new skills and be continually challenged. The retention coordinator will continue to evaluate and recommend changes to ensure that this plan acts as a living document to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's volunteers.

### **Resident Volunteer Retention**

Resident Volunteers are provided with room and board, inclusion in the points system and continuing fire education as compensation to its residents. Daily duties and station responsibilities will be distributed to assist the resident to understand the career track and general job expectations of a career firefighter. Residents will be offered the same opportunities as all other members including an assigned officer.

Currently, a program is in place that offers an incentive for resident volunteers which provides a monetary supplement and is built into the annual budget to increase recruitment and retention for this segment of our membership.

### **Membership Process**

As the candidate begins the membership process, communication remains critical. Prompt processing of a candidates application, including a reference check, will be completed as soon as possible. Providing that no red flags appear in the candidates reference check, the candidate should be notified and scheduled for the next Board of Review (BOR).

After the BOR is completed the results will be forwarded to Chief. Candidates should be informed at the conclusion of the BOR that the Chief will inform them as soon as possible of the Board's decision and to schedule a Chief's Interview. Pending the results of the Chief's Interview, the candidate will be scheduled to begin their membership paperwork process as soon as possible.

While the candidate is going through the membership process, he/she will be encouraged to attend as many weekly drills as possible. This encourages contact with current members that will help the candidate feel more comfortable within the District and allow current members a chance to get to know the candidate. They will continue to have a mentor assigned to them during these drills and be introduced at the pre-drill briefing.

### **Membership Establishment through Academy**

The length of time from the candidates' initial membership and the start of the next academy can be a high risk for turnover period. If the new member is facing a window of several months before the next academy, he/she will need to begin an initial level of training so that they can participate on a drill ground. This will not only enable recruits to interact on drill nights, but will allow familiarity to training material when it is presented during academy.

Early introduction to a recruit's officer will allow the recruit to establish a rapport, and give them an appropriate contact in the chain of command. The officer should hold them accountable to drill attendance, notify them about volunteer events, participation standards, and begin working on their competencies. The candidate should be aware at this point of the attendance standards and should be encouraged to attend as many drills as possible to meet the members and work on their skills.

The recruit should have a meeting with the training officer to talk about training issues and to develop a training plan for the recruit. For those new members that face a significant gap until the start of the next academy, monthly competency trainings are recommended. These trainings will be organized by the training officer and be held either on non-drill weekdays or weekends. These trainings will focus on introducing the recruit to basic fire ground functions so that they are familiar with them and have a foundation of knowledge that their officer can build on at drills.

### **Academy**

While the recruit is in academy, he/she will still be encouraged to attend as many drills as possible. It is taken into account that the time demands on academy students are already significant, so the training officer will determine the minimum number of required drills. Their continued attendance at drills encourages further recruit contact with their officers and the general membership until they graduate from academy.

Officers should be available to recruits throughout academy to help them study and assist with practicing hands-on skills. This can be accomplished on a one-on-one basis, or by establishing a weekly study group led by a senior firefighter or higher. These groups are not meant to serve as make-up classes for individuals who have missed classes but to help augment classroom time and make recruits proficient at skills.

### **Academy Graduation through Competency Completion**

It is important at this stage of the recruit's growth in the District that their competencies be completed as soon as possible. Therefore, the District requires this to be done within 60 days of graduation. The responsibility for accomplishing this will fall on the recruits shoulders, but officers and senior firefighters should be prepared to make themselves available as much as possible in the weeks following the completion of academy to assist with this. Firefighters/Officers should be made available on drill nights to take an engine to the training facility separate of the scheduled drill lesson to assist recruits with completing their competencies and relieve some of the time burden on officer's personal time.

As soon as the training officer is presented with the recruits completed competency task book, the recruit will be eligible for response. It is recommended that the recruit have a meeting with the training officer and/or their officer to discuss how their training has progressed and where they would like to go with it. They can also allow the training officer insight into the successes and failures of the academy and the recruit's transition into a responding firefighter.

### **Competency Completion through End of Probation:**

Upon successful completion of the probationary period the recruit will have a meeting with the training officer at which point their drill attendance, response percentage, event attendance, performance and attitude will be evaluated. If the training officer determines that the recruit has performed adequately, the recruit will be awarded with an apparel award and will no longer be on probation.

The training officer should utilize this interview as an opportunity to get the firefighter's perspective from a retention standpoint. Training, volunteer career goals, positive experiences and frustrations can be discussed to provide constructive feedback for the District that can be utilized at this pivotal point in a volunteer's career.

The District's insurance plan will also go into effect once the firefighter becomes a member of the District. As part of this benefit, the firefighter will have a brief orientation to ensure they understand the benefits and guidelines of the program and how to access it.

### **Continuing Education**

A major component of addressing short and long term retention issues will be the District wide emphasis of continuing education. By addressing this we will not only encourage our members to be better firefighters and increase our response level, but also provide firefighters and officers with tangible goals to achieve. By setting goals and monitoring members' progress in achieving them, we can avoid the plateau that can occur at various points in a member's career. Continuing education benchmarks will be included throughout the firefighters own development plan. When possible, financial assistance will be made available to the firefighter to assist in loss of wages and or assistance to compensation for approved classes.

### **Firefighter Health Program**

As cardiac failure remains the leading cause of LODDs (Line of Duty Death), our firefighters' quality of life and ability to decrease their risk of succumbing to a cardiac event is an ever growing concern. Members are encouraged to utilize the exercise equipment provided at no cost to members and immediate family.

### **Training Incentives and Rewards**

**Points:** The point system is available for review in the current Policy Manual and Orientation Manual.

**Completion of Academy/ Fire Certifications/Medical Training:** An incentive plan is in place to reward volunteers for furthering their fire service knowledge. The Length of Service award program will offer greater detail. This information can be found in the Orientation Manual.

**Tuition Reimbursement:** Members applying for the tuition reimbursement will have to meet the districts minimum drill requirements (see district policy manual). The members will need to fill out a training request for review and approval by the Training Chief. Applications will be accepted for tuition reimbursement at the private school or college level. Applications will be subject to final approval by the training officer and the Chief.

**Resource Availability:** A training resource book has been created to help district members locate fire and or medically related courses and understand the means for registering. A Training resource section is available on the districts website providing links to important training sites and information on how members can access important mailing lists for advanced notice of upcoming classes.

## Volunteer Incentives and Awards (Support Staff awards may vary)

- **Bonus Bucks**

Bonus Bucks will be given out in a value of \$5.00 per buck. (See Bonus Bucks Program Guide for detailed information). Bucks that are earned can be used for in house clothing and equipment supplies, or award recipients can redeem bucks on a reimbursement program.

- **In-House Training**

When possible and depending upon availability, the District will seek outside special speakers for motivation and leadership education. This may act as a replacement to the lost wage incentives if members are unable to get time off to travel for out of district training or leadership opportunities.

- **Apparel**

Custom District items like Jackets will be provided when possible by available funding.

- **Exercise equipment**

The health of our members is of utmost concern to both them and us. Many of our members pay for an outside gym membership to take advantage of equipment not currently offered through the district. There are several pieces of equipment that have been requested but the most asked for has been for a stairclimber. We currently do not have equipment that emulates this task yet our jobs require these muscle skills and cardio. Every year we also have a Stairclimb team that trains for an annual event, yet in our community we do not have any buildings larger than 5 stories. Because of this, the team and all other members must travel 60 miles to a suitable facility. By providing the equipment our members want, we are supporting a healthy lifestyle, weight loss and muscle development which makes people feel better, work longer, and prevent injuries.

- **Pictures**

We currently have a large group of firefighters that have tenure with our organization. We would like to encourage them to become re-motivated and energized into spending more time at the station. We would like to purchase picture frames and add pictures from drills or events or previous calls that can be hung in the members respective stations that include both them and the other members of their station. Some pictures we would like to offer as awards for outstanding service on a call or for more general means like going above and beyond for their department or community, or chairing special events. We would plan to make a bulk purchase of picture frames so they all looked alike, then print out our photos. We would make the option of rotating or updating photos possible with just the print of a new photo to fill the spot.



- **Incentives in the first 18 months – or after Firefighter completes probation**

- Candidate for Rookie of the Year
- Candidate for Medic of the year
- Candidate for Green Cross
- Traditional Helmet
- Name Tag for Dress Uniforms
- Collar Brass
- Badge

**LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM (LOSAP)**

- A. \$100.00 per year of service up to twenty (20) years of service
- B. \$200.00 per year of service from twenty-one (21) and thereafter
- C. \*Eligible award benefits shall be distributed upon the death of an eligible volunteer to his/her beneficiary.
- D. All awards are subject to IRS reporting
- E. The Fire Chief shall administer the program

- **5-40 Years of Service**

During this period, the firefighter qualifies for the following awards:

- 5 Years                      Fire Maltese Service Clock
- 7 Years                      FF Bust Statue
- 10 Years                     Fire Service Ring
- 15 Years                     Steamer Desk Set
- 20 Years                     Leather Helmet
- 25 Years                     Mantle Grandfather Clock
- 30 Years                     Fire Department Trumpet Set
- 35 Years                     Chrome Plated Axe w/Engraved Handle
- 40 Years                     Award TBD

- **District Firefighter Awards**

Awards offered for outstanding service to the District. *It is not a guarantee that every award is given out each year as the merit of earning the award is based on multiple factors including being nominated by peers, and evaluation by both the Chief and Assistant Chief.* Each recipient of the respective awards will receive a plaque and coat. Awards are as follows:

- FF of the Year
- Rookie of the Year
- Support Person of the Year
- Officer of the Year
- Volunteer Service with Pride

- **Support Volunteer Awards**

Awards are offered to Support Staff who have served in good standing for specific length of service increments. The awards are as follows:

- |            |                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| ➤ 5 Years  | Maltese Cross Clock                  |
| ➤ 7 Years  | FF Bust Statue                       |
| ➤ 10 Years | Eagle Statue                         |
| ➤ 15 Years | TBD                                  |
| ➤ 20 Years | Steam Fire Pumper in Acrylic on Base |