

A Prospect's Guide to Joining the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department

This document has been created to familiarize prospective members with the opportunities and benefits offered by joining the membership of the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department. This guide will briefly explain the minimum qualifications needed to become a member and serves to explain the interview and admission process. We welcome your feedback.

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Have you ever heard a siren or seen a fire engine – and wondered what was happening?
Have you ever witnessed or come upon a motor vehicle accident – and wished you could help?
Have you been there when someone was stricken with sudden illness – and wanted to assist?
Are you looking for new friendships, challenges and rewards?
Do you want to become involved in your community?
Are you looking to supplement your retirement?

“Firefighting is not for everyone –but Volunteering can be.”

The fire and rescue service is one of the most diverse and challenging vocations today. It is this diversity that attracts most men and women to join our ranks.

Different people volunteer for different reasons. Action oriented people enjoy the excitement and adrenaline rush that emergency services has to offer. Some see the volunteer fire service as an alternative to 'driving a desk by day' – by allowing them to 'drive a fire truck at night!'

Many like the feeling they get when they help people in their time of need and some feel it's their obligation to serve the community. Yet others just want to belong to the team. Whatever motivates you to volunteer – everyone gains the self-satisfaction of being at their best when others are dealing with what is often the worst that life has to offer.

Imagine having to prepare yourself to cope with situations that range from structure fires to childbirth to hazardous chemical spills to heart attacks to almost any imaginable emergency in between. This diversity is coupled with the fact that these skills may be needed at any time of the day or night, seven days a week, in any kind of weather, and very often under potentially stressful and emotional circumstances. Yet these same factors contribute to our profession being so personally rewarding.

We realize that firefighting is not for everyone, but we believe that volunteering can be. There is plenty of work to be done on or behind the scene – including running the business of delivering emergency services.

The personal rewards and satisfaction received from what we do is often beyond description. There is the sense of accomplishment when you control a building fire, joy and elation when a child is born, compassion for accident victims, and fulfillment from teaching fire safety.

The bottom line in our business is measured by the loss of life, pain and suffering, and the property damage we have prevented and reduced.

Volunteering in emergency services is one of the most important decisions you may make. We hope that you give this decision the time and serious consideration it deserves, and decide to join our ranks.

>about us

It's about people. Fire engines don't put out fires – people do. Defibrillators don't save lives – people do. The Jaws-of-Life never rescued anyone on its own – it takes people.

Our human resources are our greatest assets. And we want you to be a part of our team.

The Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department team of volunteers is comprised of your neighbors, your friends and maybe even your relatives. They're people just like you – with families, jobs and active lifestyles who still find time to give back to their community. Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department offers a friendly environment for you to discover your capabilities and make the most of your volunteering investment.

Established in 1905, the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department is a premier provider of emergency services in Western New York – protecting residents and businesses throughout the Village of Blasdell.

We provide comprehensive fire fighting, extrication, specialized rescue, fire police, fire prevention education and basic life support emergency medical services to the Village of Blasdell from our station on Miriam Avenue.

The department currently maintains a fleet of three fire engines, an ambulance, and a chief's command vehicle.

Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department membership is made up of approximately 35 active firefighters and EMS personnel and numerous social and honorary members.

Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department seeks volunteers to bolster its ranks in a diverse range of services. We offer a long list of benefits including a state-of-the-art training, flexible assignments and a friendly, fun, professional atmosphere.

>how we're organized

As a volunteer department of the Village of Blasdell we are somewhat different from other Fire Departments throughout the Town of Hamburg. The Village is led by an elected Mayor and Board of Trustees. The day to day operations of the Village are overseen by the Village Administrator.

The operation of the fire department is led by the fire chief. He oversees what is called the 'chain of command' for the Fire Department. This chain of command is very important in that it provides clear direction, lines of communications, and accountability for everyone involved in the chain.

On an incident scene, the chain of command provides for identifying areas of responsibility and accountability for the personal safety of every individual working within the incident command system.

Under this system, each level only reports to one supervisor. Firefighters report to a Lieutenant, who then reports to a Captain. The Captains report to the Assistant Chiefs, who are responsible to the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief reports to the Village Administrator, Mayor and Board of Trustees.

Teamwork is the foundation of our success – during an emergency *and* back at the station. Before you can become a good leader, you need to learn to be a good follower. Knowing and understanding how you fit into the chain of command will be one of the most important lessons you can learn. Know your position and play it well.

You will receive a copy of our current organizational chart – or chain of command – during your new recruit orientation.

>how we respond

Unlike a career fire department, we have no scheduled duty shifts. To accommodate your busy and varying lifestyle, our volunteers are on-call at all times – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Volunteers respond only when they are available in the area of our protection district.

The Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department is dispatched through the Town of Hamburg Emergency Dispatch Center, maintained by the Town of Hamburg Police Department. Utilizing an enhanced 911 system (E-911), dispatchers alert the volunteers via Motorola pagers with voice and tone capability.

Upon being dispatched, volunteers the station, man the appropriate apparatus, and respond to the scene. Only the chief and assistant chiefs are allowed to respond directly to the scene. Fire Police members respond to the appropriate intersections to control traffic for responding apparatus.

We respond to hazardous materials spills, leaks and releases under a 'first responder' level of operations. This means that we investigate the hazard within the limitations of our training and capabilities and call upon the resources of a qualified HazMat Response Team as needed.

>our mission

To provide the highest level of fire protection, fire prevention, rescue and emergency medical services affordable to the residents, businesses and visitors of the Village of Blasdell

>our vision

- To provide an acceptable level of emergency care and fire protection at the most affordable cost to our customers
- To be a community oriented service provider while maintaining focus on our core objectives
- To treat our customers with the consideration and compassion they deserve in their time of need
- To be good neighbors to the Village of Blasdell community
- To partner with private businesses, local government and public organizations to develop and implement innovative life safety risk reduction programs
- To encourage, educate, develop and promote our youth as our community's most valuable resource and asset
- To treat our fellow members with respect, admiration and compassion for the challenges they face in volunteering
- To appreciate our members for their dedication, recognize them for their contributions and reward them for their achievements
- To conduct ourselves in a professional manner deserving of the pride and praise of our community
- To be fair and honest in our dealings with town government and outside agencies
- To be recognized as leaders in our industry and our community
- To continually monitor our operations, administration and service delivery, recognize our limitations ... and swiftly implement effective change when necessary

>our 24x7 pledge

As an Organization and as Individual Members of the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department ,

We Pledge to:

Do the things we say we will...

Try our best to do them well...

And care about the people we serve, their property and each other...

24 hours each day – every day.

>opportunities

We offer the opportunity for you to volunteer in the area that you feel most comfortable with, where you feel you can contribute the most, and where you'll benefit the most from your volunteering experience. Our membership is split into the following divisions:

Fire/Rescue - *If getting hot, dirty and physical is your game - this is for you. We offer virtually unlimited opportunities to explore the exciting world of firefighting and the training to do it safely. Whether you only assist on the outside - or run in to the fire as others are running out - there's plenty for everyone to do on the fireground. The training is free, but the rewards are priceless.*

EMS - *If you enjoy helping people in medical emergencies - we'll provide the training absolutely FREE. In cooperation with the New York State and Erie County Departments of Health and Emergency Services, we'll train you to be a Certified First Responder (CFR), Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMT-B) or Emergency Medical Technician - Intermediate (EMT-I). EMS Only members are not required to certify in firefighting courses.*

Fire Police - *As a member of our Fire Police team, you'll assist in traffic management, crowd control and general assistance at emergency scenes and non-emergency events. We'll train you as a NYS certified Fire Police Officer. This is a great opportunity for those who want to actively contribute but cannot meet the extreme physical challenge that structural firefighting entails. Fire Police Only members are not required to certify in firefighting courses but are required to receive basic scene support operations training and then initial and refresher training in Fire Police duties.*

>join today and enjoy these benefits

Quality Training - You provide the commitment and we provide all of the training for FREE. From local and county training, NYS certified courses, to regional seminars and conferences - we offer you the opportunity to explore every avenue of emergency services and train you to be the best at what you do.

Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) - This program rewards our volunteers' years of service with a financial benefit upon reaching retirement age.

Flexible Memberships - As firm believers in the concept that volunteers should be "good at a few things instead of poor at a lot," - we offer the most flexible membership opportunities available. You can join Blasdel Volunteer Fire Department to just perform a specialized function or you can get involved in all of the volunteering opportunities we have to offer. We even accept members from outside the Village of Blasdel.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - We protect our firefighters with the latest technology in fire resistive coat, pants, leather boots, gloves, Nomex hood and traditional style fire helmets.

Duty Uniforms - Look professional and show your Blasdel Volunteer Fire Department pride in your uniform. Uniforms are provided after a minimum length of service. Other apparel is offered under a reduced or shared cost program.

Social Events - Members and their guest enjoy our annual installation dinner held each year to recognize the past year's accomplishments of the department and our volunteers, and to celebrate the dedication of our newly elected administrative and operations officers. Throughout the year we offer a variety of opportunities for you and your family to get to know the other members of your department in a relaxing atmosphere. From conventions to parades, parties, family picnic and fun fund-raisers - we not only work hard - we play hard too!

Peace of Mind - We recognize that firefighting and providing emergency services is an inherently dangerous business. That's why we take extra measures to protect our volunteers.

A comprehensive Volunteer Firemen's Benefit Law program from New York State, Workmen's Compensation coverage from the Village of Blasdel, and extensive supplemental insurance paid for by the Village provide financial security to you and your family should you be injured or fatally wounded in the line of duty. There are even free programs and services in place to ensure that your claim is handled properly and that you receive the benefits you deserve.

We care about your health, safety and well being. That's why we insist (and pay for) you to have a comprehensive medical physical examination completed every year of active duty.



Click www.ene.gov/fire or call 681-7111 for details.

*Terms/Conditions apply.

>expectations

Although no previous experience or training is required, you need more than just a desire to help people. You also need courage and dedication, assertiveness, and a willingness to learn new skills and face new challenges. Our service is one that calls on its members to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.

Our volunteers need to be team players, respecting each other's role and contributions. You need to be able to work on-call and to deal with occasional interruptions to your lifestyle, dropping what you're doing at the 'sound of the bell' to respond to the emergency needs of your fellow citizen.

A new recruit can expect to spend between 5-10 hours each week on fire department business. This entails meetings, training, emergency responses and other miscellaneous activities. Some weeks will be more and other weeks much less. The days of the week or times may vary depending on the level of activity.

We've listed a lot of the benefits you can expect from us, and in return there are certain objectives we expect you to meet:

TO APPLY:

- You must be at least 18 years of age to apply.
- You must be a citizen of the United States.
- You must be physically, intellectually and emotionally capable of performing the duties according to your area of assignment.
- You must have no record of felony convictions.

UPON ACCEPTANCE:

- New members must complete a new recruit orientation program before responding to emergency incidents.
- New recruits must successfully pass an OSHA physical examination conducted by our medical director and paid for by the fire department.
- New members will be considered on probation for a period of one year. Their probationary activities will be reviewed within thirty days following one (1) year of active service and the probationary member will be recommended for continued service or termination at that time.
- Removal from probationary status requires that the aforementioned requirements be fulfilled along with the probationary requirements of their membership classification.
- All members must attend 50% of all regular monthly business meetings and all special meetings unless excused.
- All personnel are responsible for assisting in the fund-raising efforts of the organization.
- Probationary members must have completed twelve (12) months of active service in order to vote in the election of officers.
- Failure to complete the minimum requirements can result in termination of membership.

FIRE/RESCUE PERSONNEL:

- New Firefighters must complete a 27-hour NYS Scene Support Operations course (designed to be an introduction to firefighting) or a 78-hour Firefighter 1 course (for within two years of acceptance into membership. Probationary firefighters will not be allowed to attend any other courses prior to completion of the appropriate basic training course.
- New Firefighters must attend at least 12 regularly scheduled or special drills (Training) during the one-year probation period.
- Firefighters must attend at least 50% of regularly scheduled or special drills each year following successful completion of the probation period. Each session lasts approximately 3 hours. Extra training sessions are scheduled as needed.
- Active Firefighters must respond to 15% of the total fire calls per year (equals an avg. of 25 calls).

EMS PERSONNEL:

- New EMS Personnel must complete a NYS Certified First Responder or Emergency Medical Technician-EMT course within the one-year probationary period.
- Active EMS Personnel must respond to 10% of the total EMS calls per year.

FIRE POLICE:

- New Fire Police Personnel must complete a 27-hour NYS Scene Support Operations course and a NYS Certified Fire Police course within the one-year probationary period and be duly sworn as a NYS Fire Police Officer.
- New Fire Police members must attend at least six (6) regularly scheduled or special Fire Police drills (Training) during the one-year probation period.
- Active Fire Police must respond to 10% of the total (Fire, Rescue and EMS) calls per year.

>the process

1. Each prospective member must complete and submit a standard fire department application.
The application includes personal information, lists of personal references and fire department acquaintances; and authorizations for license, criminal and arson background checks.
We are required by NYS Law to file a request for an arson background investigation with the Erie County Sheriffs Department. If you have been convicted of an arson related crime, you cannot be accepted as a member of any fire company.
2. The application for membership will be read for the first time at the next general business meeting after the application is received.
3. The applicant will be contacted to schedule an interview with the Membership Committee.

In the interview, you will be asked questions like:

- What attracted you to our agency?
- What work experience do you have?
- What skills, experience or knowledge do you feel you have to contribute?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Do you have previous volunteer experience?
- What would you like to get out of volunteering here?
- What do you like to do in your spare time?
- Do you like to work on your own, with a group or with a partner? Why?

While we are not looking for 'canned answers,' we hope that you will give these questions some thought and be prepared with your responses.

Based on information from the interview and application process, reference investigations and the outcome of background checks, the Membership Committee will make its recommendation to the Board of Trustees for approval.

4. Unless otherwise documented, new members must complete a satisfactory medical physical and new recruit orientation prior to responding to emergency incidents.
5. Upon acceptance into membership, a new recruit will begin a one-year probationary period subject to the terms and conditions described above and in the by-laws of the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department.

>contact us

To obtain an application, or to ask any questions regarding this guide or the application process – call 716-822-1921.

The Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, creed, religion, or marital status. If an applicant is approved for membership, such approval is conditional upon final receipt of references and background information consistent with the standards of the Blasdell Volunteer Fire Department.

