

# PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER HANDBOOK



# UNION FIRE COMPANY No. 2

This document has been created to familiarize the prospective members with the opportunities and benefits offered by joining the membership of the Ballston Spa Union Fire Company No. 2. The guide will briefly explain the history, benefits, mission, and serves to explain the interview and admission process. Thank you for your interest and we welcome your feedback.

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PREPARED:  
JULY 2010

# Union Fire Company No. 2

[Fire Engine-Hose Company]

316 Milton Ave Ballston Spa NY 12020

[www.ufcbsfd.com](http://www.ufcbsfd.com) 885-7121

Dear Citizen,

As Captain of the Ballston Spa Union Fire Company No. 2, I am committed to providing the most effective and efficient fire and emergency service delivery system to our community.

You will find that participation as a volunteer member of our organization will bring personal rewards and satisfaction, raise self-esteem, and provide you with a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride for a job well done. It will also provide your community with a valuable service that has the potential to touch us all. However, service as a member of our fire company requires a serious commitment. Your decision to join our organization should not be made hastily. This handbook has been developed to provide you with the information needed to make an informed decision that is right for you and us. Once you understand what is involved in being an Union Fire Company volunteer, we hope that you will be able to make the commitment we need. The service provided by our volunteers is truly valuable to the citizens, businesses and visitors of our community. We hope that you are able to contribute to our community's public safety.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require further information.

Firematically yours,

UNION FIRE COMPANY No. 2

*Fred Harris*

Fred Harris.  
Captain/Foreman

# Why Volunteer?



Have you ever witnessed or come upon a motor vehicle accident – and wished you could help?



Have you ever heard a siren or seen a fire engine – and wondered what was happening?



Do you want to become involved in your community?



Are you looking for new friendships, challenges and rewards?

“You need us and we need you.”

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



The fire 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 fire police or 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 to children.

Additionally, you will find out what you are “made of”. There are many skills and knowledge to learn as well as critical assignments. Learning how to operate a 300 HP, 1500 gallon on board tank, 1500 GPM pumper, organize and execute fire safety week, playing with the marching band at concerts and parades, or hitting the winning run in a softball tournament.

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 Union Fire Company



On September 27, 1855 the Star Fire Co. was formed and remained active until February 3, 1877 when they disbanded over a dispute with the village officials.

On February 7, 1877, a petition was presented to the village asking them to form Union Fire Co.#2. It was granted and the Union Fire Co.#2 was formed and operated until June 10, 1901. Some months prior to June 10, the firemen had asked the village to raise the bell tower so that the bell could be heard at the north end of the town, and not having their wishes met, they disbanded. The same day they reorganized as Union Fire Co. #2.

From 1877 to 1916, the fire company had a hand pulled hose cart to carry hose to the fires.

In 1916 a "Model T Ford" chemical truck was purchased and used until 1929 when the village purchased a Sanford Pumper to be housed at the Union Fire Company #2 station. The Sanford pumper remained in service until it was replaced by a new 1944 Mack 750 G.P.M. pumper. To compliment the Sanford, a 1929

Studebaker Convertible was acquired by the fire company and made into a squad car. This was used to transport men and equipment to fire scenes and bring hose back to the firehouse.

During the 1950's the company started to expand from a one truck company with the purchase of a 1954 Dodge Blitz Buggy equipped with a high pressure pump. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 attack pumpers. In 1957 the company enlarged the fire house by adding room for two more trucks and a larger kitchen. When the addition was finished an old oil tanker was acquired to haul water to rural fires. This was the first of 3 tankers to be rebuilt by the members at the fire house. A 1934 Chevrolet Sanford was purchased by the company for firematic competition and many times it was called into service to pump at large fires. It is still used today for parades and firematic ceremonies.

As time passed, Union Fire Company #2 began to purchase land at the rear of the firehouse. In 1999 we acquired the property on the south side of the firehouse to make way for our Firefighter Memorial.

In 1970, The village purchased the Thomas property on the north side of the firehouse and built the two new apparatus bays and renovated the entire station.

In 1970, a Mack CF-600, 1000 GPM pumper was purchased, giving us 2 front line pumpers, a tanker and a reserve pumper. In 1976 the members converted the Blitz Buggy into a lighting unit when a 1976 Chevrolet Attack Pumper was put into service.

In the 1980's, a second story was added above the 1957 addition giving the members a recreation room. This was paid for entirely by the members. Also in 1986 the village purchased a Ford Van which was equipped for lighting and hazardous material incidents. This put the 1954 Blitz Buggy into retirement.

In 1991, a new American La France, 1500 GPM pumper was put into service and the 1944 Mack was retired. The 1970 Mack was made into a engine-tanker to service the rural areas along with the tanker.

In 1997 we acquired a 4WD Ford Central States , 750 GPM attack pumper which replaced the 1976 Chevrolet attack pumper.

In 2009, we replaced the 1970 Mack engine tanker and the 1976 Ford tanker with a state of the art Pierce 1500 GPM attack pumper which carries 1500 gallons of water, a light tower and rehabilitation facilities.



In 1932 the Union Fire CO.#2 Band was organized by J. Walter Cornell. George Slater of Cohoes was engaged as instructor and J. Walter Cornell as assistant.

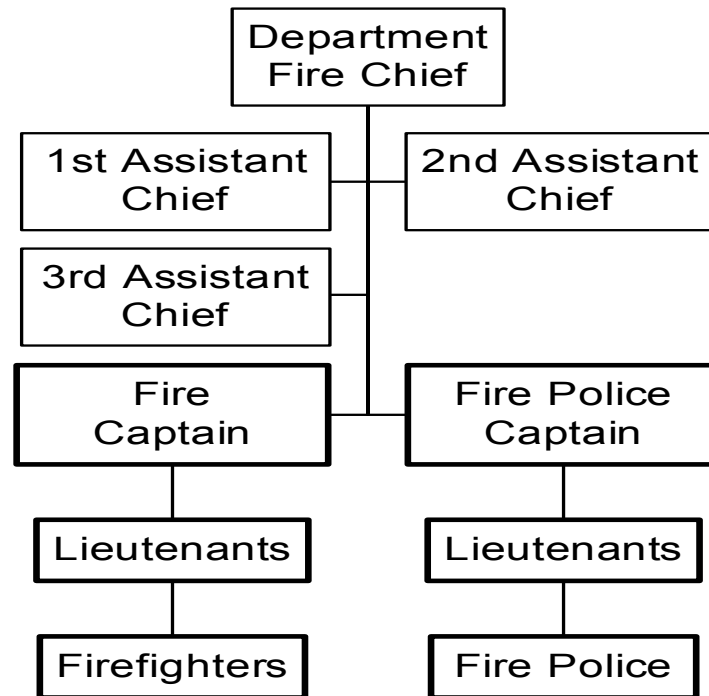
Due to World War II and other causes they disbanded on December 1, 1947 and formed the Ballston Fire Department Band. Once again in 1985 Union Fire Company #2 assumed full sponsorship of the band. It was renamed The Union Fire Company #2 Marching Band, under the direction of John Roche, and is the current director.

Over the years, the band has led Union Fire Company and the Ballston Spa Fire Dept. to many parade trophies and delighted thousands of spectators in many towns and cities. It is one of only a handful of active fire company marching bands in New York State.

Many trophies have been won at parades and firematic competition by the company and the band. All the trophies are proudly displayed throughout the station.



# Department Organization



The operations division of the fire company is lead by the fire chief. The chief serves as the COO or Chief Operating Officer of the department and oversees what is called the ‘chain of command.’ This chain of command is very important in that it provides a clear direction, line of communication, and accountability for everyone involved in the chain.

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.



Teamwork is the foundation of our success – during an emergency or 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.



# Our Mission

To provide the highest level of fire protection, fire prevention, rescue, HAZMAT and emergency medical services affordable to the residents, businesses and visitors to the Village of Ballston Spa and the towns of Milton and Ballston.

## Our Vision



To provide an acceptable level of emergency care and fire protection at the most affordable cost to our citizens.



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 residents of the Village of Ballston Spa, Towns of Milton and Ballston.



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.

# Volunteer Firefighting Facts



**Volunteers comprise >70% of firefighters in the United States.**

Of the total estimated 1,108,250 volunteer and paid firefighters across the country, 816,600 are volunteer.



**Communities served by volunteer firefighters depend on them to be their first line of defense for many types of emergencies.**

Volunteer firefighters are summoned to a wide array of emergencies across the country every day including fires, emergency medical incidents, terrorist events, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle, confined space emergencies, gas leaks, down electrical wires and other general public service calls. The public relies on volunteers to be their first line of defense in these emergencies.



**The majority of fire departments in the United States are volunteer.**

Of the over 30,000 fire departments in the country, nearly 22,000 are all volunteer; over 4,800 are mostly volunteer; 1,500 are mostly career; and over 2,000 are all career.



**Services contributed by volunteer firefighters save localities across the country and estimated \$37.2 billion per year.**



**There are many tasks or duties that are essential to a fire department's success, which do not involve advanced fire training – on and off an emergency scene.**

We believe that you would be very surprised to find out how many jobs require very little training and are essential to the success of the department.



**The Ballston Spa Fire Department has a “junior firefighter” program where individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 are allowed to be members of the fire company and receive training.**

The idea is that once graduated from the junior firefighter program, junior firefighter members will become active members, with experience and advanced certifications.



# 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 and national 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.

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

**Dress Uniforms** - Look professional and show your Union Fire Company pride in your navy blue dress uniform. Uniforms are provided immediately upon becoming a member. Other apparel is offered under a reduced or shared cost program.

**Social Events** - Members and their guest enjoy our annual Groom's Ball dinner held each March to recognize and appreciate the members family dedication. There is a company picnic every Labor Day for the family to relax and enjoy the last weekend of the summer. 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 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 Ballston Spa, and extensive supplemental insurance paid for by the fire company provide financial security to you and your family should you be injured or fatally wounded in the line of duty.

# 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. The fire service is one that calls on its members to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.

Fire service 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 when the 'tones go off' to respond to the emergency needs of your fellow citizen.

A new members can expect to spend between 5-10 hours each week on fire company 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. However, most regularly scheduled events occur on Monday evenings.

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 reside within the fire district (Village of Ballston Spa, Town of Milton, Town of Ballston).



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 on probation for a period of three years. Their probationary activities will be reviewed within thirty days following three (3) years of active service and the probationary member will be recommended for either continued probation, continued full service, or separation.



Removal from probationary status requires that the aforementioned requirements be fulfilled along with the probationary requirements of their membership classification.



All new members must attend at least 60% of all regular bi-weekly or special training exercises held on Mondays and parades.



All personnel are responsible for assisting in the fund-raising efforts of the organization.



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.



All new members must attend 60% of all regular bi-weekly or special training exercises held on Mondays and parades.

#### **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 eighteen (18) regularly scheduled or special Fire Police drills (Training) during the three-year probation period.



Active Fire Police must respond to 10% of the total (Fire, Rescue and EMS) calls per year.



# Process

The department only accepts applications from individuals who live in our district, or within a "reasonable distance." Under New York State law, no member convicted of arson can join any fire department.

Simply stop by any night or specifically Monday nights (our weekly equipment check and drill night) around 6 pm – and just grab a member and ask for an application.



Each prospective member must complete and submit a standard fire department application along with a ten-dollar (\$10) filing fee.

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 Saratoga County Sheriffs Department. If you have been convicted of an arson related crime, you cannot be accepted as a member of any fire company.



The application for membership will be read for the first time at the next general business meeting after the application is received.



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 fire company?
- 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 general membership at the next business meeting following the applicant interview.



A majority vote by the general membership will decide if the applicant is accepted or declined.

If accepted, the new member will be notified to report to the fire station at the next general membership meeting and be sworn in and complete the follow-up processing.

If declined, the applicant will be notified of such details and he/she may not reapply for six (6) months.



Upon acceptance into membership, a new recruit will begin a three-year probationary period subject to the terms and conditions described above and in the by-laws of the Union Fire Company No. 2.

# Contact Information

To obtain an application, or to ask any questions regarding this handbook or the application process – contact a member of the Membership Committee by clicking: [ufcbsfd@yahoo.com](mailto:ufcbsfd@yahoo.com) or calling: 885-7121.



The Ballston Spa Union Fire Company No. 2 Volunteer Fire Company 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 Ballston Spa Union Fire Company No. 2. A conditionally approved member may be dismissed at any time and for any reason within three (3) years of his or her acceptance as a conditional member.

# NOTES