



## East County Fire and Rescue Standard Operating Guidelines

Title Volunteer Program	SOG # 1.4.2 Volunteer Program
Polignation <i>Joshua Seeds</i> E54DE15E07214D8...	Date 03-19-2025
Standard Operating Guideline Adoption <i>SRH</i>	Date 3/25/25

### Purpose

The purpose of this SOG is to define the rules and regulations of East County Fire and Rescue’s (ECFR) Volunteer Program.

### Scope

This SOG applies to volunteers who operate in a firefighting role with ECFR.

### Policy

Volunteers for ECFR are an integral part of the operations and culture of the district. This document will describe the process from application to regular responding member, outline the minimum requirements, and include the reimbursement procedure.

### Procedure

Volunteers for ECFR must apply to the district using the standard district-approved application packet. The minimum requirements to apply are: being at least 18 years of age at time of appointment, a high school graduate or GED holder, and possessing a valid driver’s license. Applications will only be accepted during recruitment periods.

Once an application period has closed, a review of the applications will commence.

- A candidate pool will be determined and those invited will participate in a physical agility test (PAT).
- Candidates who successfully pass the PAT will then be invited to a panel interview.
- When the panel interviews are completed a candidate priority list will be submitted to the Fire Chief.
- A determination will be made of how many candidates can be invited to a Volunteer Academy (VFA 25-01 ex.), based on available budget, turnouts, masks, etc.
- The applicants will then undergo background checks for criminal and driving history.

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- Candidates invited to attend the VFA will be contacted. A prospective volunteer must attend the entirety of the academy.
- An orientation date will be set, during which the candidate will: be provided with a probationary book outlining expectations, sign onboarding paperwork for the district, sign a VFA waiver, sign this SOG to attest understanding of its content, and cover other topics not listed here.
- Upon completion of the VFA candidates will undergo a physical exam from a district approved doctor to ensure they are fit for duty. During this exam, candidates will also undergo a drug screen.
- Once a candidate completes the VFA skills tests and is cleared for response, they will be considered a Volunteer for ECFR.
- Once a volunteer is released to respond to calls, ECFR will add the volunteer to the Board of Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers roster for inclusion in the pension plan (vesting after ten years of service), as well as for Line of Duty Accident and Injury coverage. Additionally, the volunteer will be covered under ECFR's Accident and Illness insurance policy while training or on shift. Both the pension plan and accident/injury coverage costs will be fully covered by the district. Since the volunteer is not considered an employee, Labor & Industry coverage does not apply.

It is important to note that this position is voluntary: **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 553.101 provides in part as follows:**

**(a) An individual who performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered, is considered to be a volunteer during such hours....** (U.S. Government Publishing Office, n.d.)

A volunteer is not an employee and is, therefore, considered "at will," meaning they can be let go at any time. During the VFA, there is no reimbursement, as the candidate has not yet contributed to the district. The VFA is a period for the candidate to determine whether they want to provide service as a responder to the district.

Once a candidate reaches Volunteer status, they will be placed on probation for one year. Once a volunteer completes a year of service and attains NFPA FF1 and Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations certifications, and completes CPR and Wildland Fire training, the volunteer will receive a Class B shirt, name tags, the removal of probationary helmet decals, and a badge will be considered.

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**Activity Requirements**

Once a candidate becomes a responding volunteer, activity requirements will be implemented. A volunteer must complete 24 hours of staffing per month. These 24 hours can be completed in any format, but volunteers are encouraged to complete this in 12- or 24-hour shifts. Authorization from the captain or AIC must be obtained before the volunteer can ride with the shift. This should be done at least one shift in advance. While on duty, a volunteer is considered part of the crew and is expected to respond to all emergencies, prepare or restock apparatus for response, decontaminate equipment (including their district-issued turnouts), and adhere to any other tasks assigned by the officer on duty.

A volunteer must also attend a minimum of two drills per month. These drills should consist of two-hour segments and can be completed while on duty riding with the shift or by attending two monthly drills. Drill hours should be documented in ECFR's record management system.

**Reimbursement**

The district recognizes that volunteers will incur expenses while rendering services. The district will provide each volunteer with two district T-shirts, one district sweatshirt, two district-issued pants, and one district cap. These items are considered to be ECFR property and must be returned upon separation from the district.

The district will reimburse the volunteer \$75.00 per month for those who meet the minimum requirements. This reimbursement will be distributed quarterly. A direct deposit account should be set up during orientation. Appropriate taxes will be withheld from the quarterly reimbursement. This ensures the district remains in compliance with a nominal sum, paying out less than 20% of a career firefighter's salary (SNURE LAW OFFICE, PSC, 2024, April 1).

Volunteers that fall below the minimum requirements will be removed from the district and no reimbursement will be issued after the removal date.

**District Turnouts and Clothing**

Turnouts are not to be taken out of the station unless approved by a company officer or fire chief. A volunteer may be allowed to remove turnouts for the purpose of riding at a different station or attending a training opportunity where it would be burdensome for the volunteer to return to the station before attending. District-issued T-shirts and sweatshirts are to be worn on duty or during training events. These articles of clothing should not be worn in social settings outside the district. Volunteers should exercise due care when representing the district outside of the district.

**References**

SNURE LAW OFFICE, PSC. (2024, April 1). *Volunteer compensation*.  
<https://www.snurelaw.com/volunteer-compensation>

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U.S. Government Publishing Office. (n.d.). *Title 29 - Labor, part 553: General statement of findings and purpose*. Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-A/part-553/subpart-B/section-553.101>

**Acknowledgment of Understanding**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the **Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)** for the ECFR Volunteer Program. I agree to adhere to the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined within the document. I understand that failure to comply with these guidelines may result in disciplinary action or termination from the program.

**Volunteer Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_