

**SONOMA COUNTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
(COUNTY SERVICE AREA # 40)

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**VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY**  
**RULES AND REGULATIONS**

**OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of each Volunteer Fire Company (VFC) shall be to further the efficiency of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services (SCES) in all respects, preserve life and property, prevent and suppress fires within their assigned initial attack areas, suppress other fires in Sonoma county in extreme emergencies and when requested by the REDCOM Dispatch Center, and promote and maintain harmonious association among the other members of the Volunteer Fire Companies of Sonoma County. Each organization will operate under the supervision of the County Fire Chief and/or his representatives.

The County of Sonoma appoints the Director of Emergency Services as per State of California statute to serve as the County Fire Chief with the responsibility to administer and supervise all operations of the County Fire Services.

**ADMINISTRATION**

1. County Fire Chief -The term "County Fire Chief", as used in these Rules and Regulations, shall mean that person responsible and accountable for all fire prevention and suppression activities in the unincorporated areas of the County designated as County Service Area #40, in this case the Sonoma County Director of Emergency Services.
2. Volunteer Fire Chief -The term "Volunteer Fire Chief", as used in these Rules and Regulations, shall mean the officer responsible and accountable for the management of a Volunteer Fire Company located in Sonoma County Service Area #40.
3. Sonoma County Emergency Services - The term "Sonoma County Fire Services, SCFS" as used in these Rules and Regulations shall mean Sonoma County Service Area # 40, a division of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services.
4. Volunteer Fire Company – The term "Volunteer Fire Company, VFC" as used in these Rules and Regulations, shall mean those organizations authorized by California Health and Safety code 14825 – 14827 with a current Certificate of Organization on file with the Sonoma County Recorder.

**VOLUNTEER FIRE CHIEF**

1. Each VFC shall have a Volunteer Fire Chief. This position will be responsible for the overall management of the specific VFC. Further, this position will represent personnel and interests of the specific department at appropriate meetings, committees and assignments as deemed appropriate by the County Fire Chief.
2. The County shall hold the Volunteer Fire Chief or his/her designee, accountable for the general condition and efficient operation of the VFC, training of members and performance of all other duties imposed upon him.

3. The County Fire Chief and Volunteer Fire Chief are accountable for inspecting or having VFC members inspect fire hydrants, cisterns and all other sources of water supply within the VFC's initial response area at least once annually.
4. The Volunteer Fire Chief will assist SCES to determine the cause of fires. Any such evidence should be preserved.
5. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall make every effort to attend:
  - a. All fires or other emergencies or ensure the appropriate level of response.
  - b. Meetings called by the President of the Sonoma County Volunteer Fire Companies Association.
  - c. Quarterly meetings called by the Sonoma County Fire Chief designed to provide advise and review the operations of County Fire Services.
  - d. Special committee meetings called by either the Sonoma County Volunteer Fire Companies Association or the County Fire Chief as needed.

#### **VOLUNTEER FIRE OFFICERS**

1. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall have the authority to appoint other fire officers as needed. These Officers shall have the full powers and responsibilities of the Chief in the absence of the Chief.

#### **GENERAL COMPANY OPERATIONS**

1. The VFC shall consist of the number of members as determined by the Volunteer Fire Chief and County Fire Chief, based upon the needs of the community in providing proper fire protection.
2. Each member of the VFC shall be under the direct charge of an officer and responsible to the Volunteer Fire Chief for the efficient operation of the VFC.
3. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall select experienced members to inspect all equipment at least once a week to see that equipment is clean, in its proper place and ready for service. A monthly report of this activity shall be made to the Volunteer Fire Chief.
4. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall keep or cause to be kept, a chronological record of all activities of the VFC and a record of the fire and drill service of each member.
5. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall keep or cause to be kept, a pre-planned response procedure, which will insure apparatus coverage.

#### **DRIVERS AND DRIVING**

1. No member shall operate emergency equipment until his/her driving and mechanical abilities have been thoroughly checked and cleared by the Volunteer Fire Chief and member is thoroughly familiar with the equipment s/he is to operate.
2. Members driving each piece of emergency equipment shall make an inspection of said equipment after each run; i.e., checking the oil, gasoline, water, batteries, tires and accounting for all equipment. S/he shall report to his/her officer a record of loss or damage to any equipment.
3. Each member authorized to drive shall be thoroughly familiar with the area served by his/her VFC, including condition of routes during different seasons and location of water supplies.

4. Members driving shall observe speed limits and traffic laws consistent with safety and considering traffic, weather and road conditions. Special care shall be taken when approaching all intersections and the apparatus shall be kept under control at all times.
5. Upon receipt of alarm, all members will report to the fire station and/or fire scene (as directed by VFC policy).
6. Before responding out of the initial response area, all apparatus shall be staffed with at least two (2) volunteer members. Water tenders shall be staffed with at least one (1) volunteer member. Volunteers shall not respond out of initial response area in private vehicles unless directed to do so by an officer.

#### **MEMBERSHIP DUTIES**

1. All members shall make every attempt to attend all meetings and drills of the VFC, except in case of sickness or other emergency. The Volunteer Fire Chief or Officer shall be notified in case of absence. All members are required to participate in at least 75% of the monthly training activities provided by the SCES. This would be a minimum of 27 hours in a typical year.
2. All members shall acquaint themselves with proper radio communication procedures.
3. All members should thoroughly acquaint themselves with the VFC's Station and initial response area.
4. All members shall, if at all possible, respond to all fires and other emergencies of which they are aware or have a valid excuse for not responding.
5. All members shall be able to locate all water supplies in their immediate area.
6. Under guidance of the Volunteer Fire Chief, all members should familiarize themselves with the following type of buildings: places of public assembly, factories, commercial buildings, industrial buildings, mercantile buildings, etc., within their initial response area so that s/he is familiar with any fire hazard, hazardous situation that may endanger lives, and the physical construction of the building.
7. All members shall complete and remain current in Public Safety CPR and First Aid training (at a minimum) as required by the California Health and Safety Code and Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.
8. No member may leave any fire or other emergency without first obtaining a release from the Incident Commander.
9. All members shall read and be familiar with their Volunteer Fire Department Bylaws, Policies and Regulations.
10. All members shall carefully preserve any and all evidence obtained on fires. Proper authorities shall be immediately notified of said findings.
11. All members, at an emergency incident, shall immediately report anything of a suspicious or dangerous nature to the Incident Commander.

12. Members should exercise proper precautionary safety measures at all times to avoid injury to themselves or others while engaged in firefighting, working around the station and apparatus or engaged in other activities.
13. All members shall report immediately to their appropriate superior officer any loss of or damage to any property; i.e., spanners, hose, etc.
14. All members shall report to their superior officer any injuries sustained by any member while engaged in or arising out of the performance of official duties
15. All members shall do their part to maintain a clean station and apparatus at all times.
16. All members shall follow orders, show courtesy and display proper respect for the officers.
17. All members shall avail themselves of training on apparatus and through training and drills, shall become proficient in fire control, fire engine operation and operation of all fire-related equipment.
18. Members shall report any and all malfunctions of apparatus and/or equipment to their superior officer.
19. Unless released by an Officer, all members shall stay and assist in placing apparatus back in service as soon as possible after the apparatus has returned to the station from an emergency call.
20. All members will have a working knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS).
21. No member shall leave the scene of an emergency unless released by the Incident Commander.
22. All members must pass an annual fit test for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) as part of the SCES respiratory protection program mandated by 29 Code of Federal Regulations 1910.134 and section 5144 of the California Code of Regulations. *Exceptions are those volunteers who had beards and were on the Certificate of Organization prior to January 17, 2002 and have signed a waiver prohibiting them from using an SCBA and entering an IDLH atmosphere in the performance of their duties. The Facial Hair Release and Waiver must be renewed annually. Also, Support Volunteers whose duties, as determined by the Volunteer Fire Chief, prohibit the use of an SCBA and from entering an IDLH atmosphere.*  
The Volunteer Fire Chief shall ensure that all members of the VFC are in compliance.
23. All members responding to wildland fires either as part of a strike team/task force, or as single increment mutual or automatic aid resource to other jurisdictions, shall comply with the minimum training requirements of National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) 310-1 as mandated by the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS) and the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association. Firefighters shall carry in their possession a Firefighter Type 1 “red card” and officers a Firefighter Type 2 with Engine or Crew Boss endorsement “red card” as proof of training compliance. “Red cards” are issued by the County Fire Chief after completion of required training courses.  
The County Fire Chief will review training compliance prior to each fire season and make recommendations to REDCOM dispatch as to each VFC’s ability to respond on strike teams and mutual or automatic aid.

#### QUALIFICATIONS

1. Members shall not be less than 18 years of age.

2. Members must be in good physical condition and able to perform any duty assigned.
3. Members shall live or work in the area protected by the VFC where s/he is a registered member or making application for membership. Volunteer Fire Chief may approve exceptions.
4. Each vehicle operator must have a valid California Driver's License, with appropriate endorsements for operating fire engines and/or water tenders.
5. All members must be willing to take and carry out any orders given by a superior officer.
6. All members must conduct themselves in an honorable and respectable manner at all times.
7. All members will conduct themselves in such a manner as to get along well with fellow firefighters and others.
8. No member shall have been convicted of a felony in this state or any other state or in any federal jurisdiction, or of any offense in any other state or in any federal jurisdiction, which would have been a felony if committed in this state, nor be under current formal probation supervision.
9. Members shall not violate any federal, state, or local policy, law or regulation related to the workplace. These violations include, but are not limited to violence, discrimination, disability, and safety.
10. All members shall complete a basic fire-training academy or equivalent prior to being able to respond to emergencies.
11. Those members coming on as Support Volunteers will be required to meet only those requirements and attend only that training as indicated by the specific duty assignments given them in accordance with the Support Volunteer position description and in consultation between the Volunteer Fire Chief and the County Fire Chief.

#### **GENERAL**

1. All members shall follow the orders of their appointed or elected officers, Chief or duly authorized representative(s).
2. All members shall assist in any and all work pertaining to the VFC.
3. All members shall follow through on all business or orders (through the regular channels of command) whether it is at Department or County level.
4. Any work on fires, at drills or other emergencies shall be done in an efficient, orderly and quiet manner.
5. Individuals who are not members of the VFC shall be allowed to handle or ride upon the apparatus only with prior approval of the Incident Commander and/or Volunteer Fire Chief.
6. Members shall practice safety measures while riding on apparatus.
7. The Volunteer Fire Chief shall designate a member(s) who shall be charged with maintaining all of the VFC's apparatus in good mechanical condition and ready for immediate service.

8. When answering an alarm in his/her private vehicle, members shall obey all traffic rules and regulations for their own protection and to avoid liability.
9. Since the VFC relies on members to respond to the station in their private vehicles, all members must have personal auto insurance of adequate coverage and limits. The Volunteer Fire Chief is responsible for having a process that verifies such coverage if requested by SCES or law enforcement officials.
10. All members shall wear the proper safety clothing designed for the specific emergency.
11. Members will not sell, alter, give away or in any way dispose of any property belonging to the County of Sonoma nor loan any such property without proper authorization.
12. Members will not change, alter, add to or remove any equipment from any station or apparatus without first receiving proper authorization.
13. Possession, drinking, consumption of, or being under the influence of intoxicating beverages or drugs while at/on a fire, rescue, standby call or while at a Fire Station or on an emergency call will not be tolerated.
14. All Volunteer Fire Company members of County Service Area #40 shall comply with the foregoing Rules and Regulations. Non-compliance therewith may result in reprimand, suspension or removal from active roster.

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I received a copy of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services *Volunteer Fire Company Rules and Regulations*. I certify that I have read and understand the Rules and Regulations. I acknowledge that if I fail to follow the terms of this policy I may be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal as a Volunteer.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Department of Emergency Services Volunteer