

## Chaplains

### 322.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the guidelines for Blue Ridge Fire District chaplains to provide counseling or emotional support to members of the District, their families and members of the public.

### 322.2 POLICY

The Blue Ridge Fire District shall ensure that district chaplains are properly appointed, trained and supervised to carry out their responsibilities without financial compensation. Reasonable efforts shall be made to incorporate chaplains from varying denominations reflective of the community to the best extent possible.

### 322.3 ELIGIBILITY

Requirements for participation as a chaplain for the District may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Being above reproach, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, free from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, and free from excessive debt.
- (b) Managing his/her household, family and personal affairs well.
- (c) Having a good reputation in the community.
- (d) Successful completion of an appropriate-level background investigation.
- (e) A minimum of five years of successful counseling or ministry experience.
- (f) Being in good health.
- (g) Possessing a valid driver license.

The Fire Chief may allow exceptions to these eligibility requirements based on organizational and community needs and the qualifications of the individual.

### 322.4 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

The Blue Ridge Fire District shall endeavor to recruit and appoint only those applicants who meet the high ethical, moral and professional standards set forth by the District.

All applicants shall be required to meet and pass the same pre-employment procedures as district members before appointment with the exception of any entry level Firefighter knowledge or physical agility tests.

#### 322.4.1 RECRUITMENT

Chaplains should be recruited on a continuous and ongoing basis consistent with district policy on equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices. A primary qualification for participation in the application process should be an interest in and an ability to assist the District in serving the public. Chaplain candidates are encouraged to participate in ride-alongs with district members before and during the selection process.

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### 322.4.2 SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

Chaplain candidates shall successfully complete the following process prior to appointment as a chaplain:

- (a) Submit the appropriate written application.
- (b) Include a recommendation from employers or volunteer programs.
- (c) Interview with the Fire Chief and the chaplain coordinator.
- (d) Successfully complete an appropriate-level background investigation.
- (e) Complete an appropriate probationary period as designated by the Fire Chief.

Chaplains are volunteers and serve at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Chaplains shall have no property interest in continued appointment. However, if a chaplain is removed for alleged misconduct, the chaplain will be afforded an opportunity solely to clear his/her name through a liberty interest hearing, which shall be limited to a single appearance before the Blue Ridge Fire District or the authorized designee.

### 322.5 IDENTIFICATION AND UNIFORMS

As representatives of the District, chaplains are responsible for presenting a professional image to the community. Chaplains shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. Uniforms and necessary safety equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided for each chaplain. Identification symbols worn by chaplains shall be different and distinct from those worn by other members through the inclusion of "Chaplain" on the uniform and other identifying PPE. Chaplain uniforms and PPE shall not reflect any religious affiliation.

Chaplains will be issued Blue Ridge Fire District identification cards, which must be carried at all times while on-duty. The identification cards will be the standard Blue Ridge Fire District identification cards, with the exception that "Chaplain" will be indicated on the cards. Chaplains shall be required to return any issued uniforms, PPE or other district property at the termination of service.

Chaplains shall conform to all uniform regulations and appearance standards of the District.

### 322.6 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chaplains assist the District, its members and the community as needed. Assignments of chaplains will usually be to augment the Administration Division, but chaplains may be assigned to other areas within the District as needed. Chaplains should be placed only in assignments or programs that are consistent with their knowledge, skills and abilities and the needs of the District.

All chaplains will be assigned duties by the chaplain coordinator or the authorized designee or an IC.

Chaplains may not proselytize or attempt to recruit members of the District or the public into a religious affiliation while representing themselves as chaplains with this district. If there is any

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question as to the receiving person's intent, chaplains should verify that the person is desirous of spiritual counseling or guidance before engaging in such discussion.

Chaplains may not accept gratuities for any service, or any subsequent actions or follow-up contacts that were provided while functioning as a chaplain for the Blue Ridge Fire District.

### 322.6.1 COMPLIANCE

Chaplains are volunteer members of the District and, except as otherwise specified within this policy, are required to comply with the Community Volunteer Program Policy and other applicable policies.

### 322.6.2 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

- (a) Chaplains will be asked to be available for call on an as-needed basis.
- (b) Chaplains operating at emergency incidents or large-scale district events shall operate within and as part of the Incident Command System (ICS) at all times, including participating in and replying to Personal Accountability Reports (PAR) conducted as part of the incident or event.
- (c) Each chaplain should serve with the Blue Ridge Fire District a minimum of four hours per month to maintain the necessary proficiencies and contacts necessary to be effective in their service.
- (d) At the end of each period of service or response to an incident the chaplain will complete a chaplain's report and submit it to the Fire Chief and chaplain coordinator or the authorized designee.
- (e) Chaplains shall be permitted to ride with members during any shift and observe Blue Ridge Fire District operations or training sessions, provided the on-duty Captain has been notified and is aware of the activity.
- (f) Chaplains shall not be evaluators of members of the Blue Ridge Fire District.
- (g) In responding to incidents, a chaplain shall never function in a hazardous area or serve as an assistant other than the chaplain's role.
- (h) When responding to in-progress calls for service, chaplains will be required to stand-by in a secure area until the situation has been deemed safe.
- (i) Chaplains shall serve only within the jurisdiction of the Blue Ridge Fire District unless otherwise authorized by the Fire Chief or the authorized designee.
- (j) Each chaplain shall have access to current member rosters, addresses, telephone numbers, duty assignments and other information that may assist in his/her duties. Such information will be considered confidential, and each chaplain will exercise appropriate security measures to prevent unauthorized access to the data.

### 322.6.3 ASSISTING DISTRICT MEMBERS

The responsibilities of a chaplain related to district members include, but are not limited to:

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- (a) Assisting in making notification to families of members who have been seriously injured or killed and, after notification, responding to the hospital or home of the member.
- (b) Visiting sick or injured members in the hospital or at home.
- (c) Attending and participating in funerals of active or retired members, when requested.
- (d) Serving as a resource for members who are dealing with the public during significant incidents (e.g., accidental death, suicide, suicidal subjects, serious accident, drug and alcohol abuse or a mass casualty incident (MCI)).
- (e) Providing counseling and support for members and their families.
- (f) Being alert to the needs of members and their families.

### 322.6.4 ASSISTING THE DISTRICT

The responsibilities of a chaplain related to the Blue Ridge Fire District include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Assisting members in defusing a conflict or incident, when requested.
- (b) Responding to any significant incident (e.g., natural and accidental death, suicide and attempted suicide, family disturbance or MCI) in which the IC or supervisor believes the chaplain could assist in accomplishing the mission of the District.
- (c) Responding to all major disasters, such as a natural disaster, bombing, MCI and similar critical incidents.
- (d) Being available, or if possible, on-duty during major demonstrations or any public function that requires the presence of a large number of district members.
- (e) Attending district functions such as academy graduations, ceremonies and social events and offering invocations and benedictions, as requested.
- (f) Participating in in-service training classes.
- (g) Training others to enhance the effectiveness of the District.

### 322.6.5 ASSISTING THE COMMUNITY

The duties of a chaplain related to the community include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Fostering familiarity with the role of fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) members in the community.
- (b) Providing an additional link between the community, other chaplain coordinators and the District.
- (c) Providing a liaison with various civic, business and religious organizations.
- (d) Assisting the community when they request representatives or leaders of various denominations.
- (e) Assisting the community in any other function, as needed or requested.
- (f) Making referrals in cases where specialized attention is needed or in cases that are beyond the chaplain's ability to assist.

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### 322.6.6 CHAPLAIN MEETINGS

Chaplains may be required to attend scheduled meetings. Absences from such meetings should be satisfactorily explained to the Fire Chief.

### 322.7 PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS

No person who provides chaplain services to members of the District may work or volunteer for the Blue Ridge Fire District in any capacity other than that of chaplain.

Chaplains shall be familiar with state evidentiary laws and rules pertaining to the limits of the clergy-penitent, psychotherapist-patient and other potentially applicable privileges and shall inform members when it appears reasonably likely that the member is discussing matters that are not subject to privileged communications. In such cases, the chaplain should consider referring the member to an appropriate counseling resource or available program.

No chaplain shall provide counsel to or receive confidential communications from any Blue Ridge Fire District member concerning an incident personally witnessed by the chaplain or concerning an incident involving the chaplain.

### 322.8 TRAINING

The District may establish a minimum number of training hours and standards for district chaplains. The training, as approved by the Training Coordinator, may include:

- Stress management
- Death notifications
- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress
- Burnout for district members and chaplains
- Legal liability and confidentiality
- Ethics
- Responding to crisis situations
- The fire and EMS family
- Substance abuse
- Member injury or death
- Sensitivity and diversity