

VESTAL FIRE DISTRICT
Application Process for New Members
Adopted: 06/24/2026
Revised:

Policy #:	401.00
Policy:	Application Process for New Fire Department Members
Effective Date:	06/24/2026
Authority:	NYS Town Law §176-b; NYS Executive Law §837-o
Cross-reference:	

PURPOSE

To establish a standardized, efficient, and legally compliant process for the application, screening, approval, and onboarding of new volunteer firefighters within the Vestal Fire District.

POLICY

All applicants for volunteer membership shall be processed in accordance with applicable New York State law and Vestal Fire District policies.

No applicant shall be granted membership until all required screenings, verification activities, Fire Company recommendations, Board of Fire Commissioners' approval, and medical clearance requirements have been completed.

Final approval authority for membership shall rest with the Board of Fire Commissioners.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Membership determinations shall be made in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws prohibiting unlawful discrimination.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Fire Chief

- Ensures compliance with onboarding requirements.
- Reviews screening and verification results.
- Makes recommendations regarding applicant eligibility.

Company Fire Advisory Officers

- Conduct applicant interviews.
- Verify application completeness.
- Coordinate Company review and onboarding.

Fire District Secretary

- Manages application tracking.
- Initiates and monitors screening and verification activities.
- Maintains application status tracking and process documentation.
- Coordinates Board approval and onboarding documentation.

Fire Company Membership

- Provides recommendations regarding applicant eligibility.

Board of Fire Commissioners

- Provides final approval authority for membership applications.

The membership process follows a sequential path: application submission, interview, screening and verification, Fire Chief review, Fire Company recommendation, Board of Fire Commissioners consideration, conditional onboarding, medical clearance, and final activation. Applicants remain in pre-membership status until conditional approval is granted. Following conditional approval, applicants shall be considered probationary members until all required approvals, onboarding requirements, medical clearance, and final activation steps are complete.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Each applicant shall complete an Application Jacket containing the following:

- Volunteer Membership Application.
- Three Character Reference Forms.
- NYS DCJS Volunteer Firefighter Inquiry Form.
- Personal History Statement Authorization Form.
- Application Checklist.

The Interview Jacket shall contain:

- Interview Cover Sheet.
- Applicant Question and Response Forms.
- Emergency Services Verification Form, when applicable.

APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. An applicant shall be provided with an Application Jacket to complete.
2. An interview date and time shall be arranged for the applicant to return the completed paperwork and to be interviewed.
3. The applicant shall return at the scheduled date and time to be interviewed by the Company Fire Advisory Officer (Station Chief, Captain, 1st Lieutenant, and/or Company President).

4. The interviewing Company Fire Advisory Officer shall:
 - Ensure that all sections of the application are completed.
 - Conduct an interview with the applicant. Applicants under the age of 18 shall have a parent or guardian present.
 - Review the Applicant Question and Response Form with the applicant.
 - Present the NYS DCJS Volunteer Firefighter Inquiry Form for completion during the interview.
 - Complete and sign the Personal History Statement Authorization Form.
 - Witness and sign all areas of the application, including areas where the signature needs to be witnessed by the interviewing Company Fire Advisory Officer.
 - Provide the applicant with Character Reference forms, return envelopes, and submission instructions. All completed reference letters must be submitted at the applicant's interview.
5. Applicants under the age of 18 shall additionally comply with all applicable junior firefighter restrictions, policies, and New York State labor law requirements.
6. The applicant shall be introduced to the Fire Company membership, and the application shall proceed to the District-level screening and verification.
7. The completed Application Jacket shall be forwarded to the Fire District Secretary along with written notification from the Company Fire Advisory Officers authorizing the screening and verification process.
8. Emergency Services Verification shall be conducted for applicants with prior emergency services membership history by a Company Fire Advisory Officer. The Company Fire Advisory Officers shall complete the Emergency Services Verification Form before the application proceeds to final Company review.

SCREENING AND VERIFICATION PROCESS

Screening and verification shall begin immediately after the interview process is complete. These activities shall be conducted concurrently whenever possible to support timely processing.

Fire Chief or Designee

The Fire Chief or designee shall submit the NYS DCJS background check request within the required timeframe.

Fire District Secretary

The Fire District Secretary shall coordinate, track, and document all District-level screening and verification activities, including:

1. Conducting the NYS DMV LENS check and obtaining the applicant's Driver's Abstract.
2. Processing the NYS DCJS Volunteer Firefighter Inquiry paperwork.
3. Forwarding the required NYS DCJS paperwork and supporting documentation to the Broome County Sheriff's Identification Division, including:
 - A copy of page 4 of the application

- The applicant's Driver's Abstract
- 4. Conducting occupational history verification, when applicable.
- 5. Conducting character reference checks.
- 6. Confirming receipt of any required emergency services verification.
- 7. Receiving all data from the Broome County Sheriff's Office, including the Employment Verification letters and character references.
- 8. Maintaining application status tracking and process documentation.

Once all required screening and verification activities are complete, the Fire District Secretary shall return the completed Application Jacket to the Company Fire Advisory Officers for final Company review.

HOLD STATUS

No final membership recommendation or Board approval action shall occur until the required screening, and verification activities are completed.

Applicants shall remain in pre-membership status until all required screenings and verifications are completed.

SCREENING REVIEW

The Fire Chief shall review all completed screening and verification materials, including:

- Broome County Sheriff's Office results.
- Occupational history verification results.
- Character references.
- Emergency Services Verification results.
- Any additional supporting documentation deemed necessary. Based upon the review, the Fire Chief shall recommend:
 - a. Continuation of the application process, or
 - b. Denial of the application

COMPANY MEMBERSHIP RECOMMENDATION

1. Upon completion of the screening review, the Company Fire Advisory Officers shall review the completed application materials prior to presentation to the Company membership.
2. The applicant shall then be presented to the Company membership at the next regular Company meeting for a recommendation regarding membership approval.
3. Following the Company's recommendation, a Company Fire Advisory Officer shall forward the Company's recommendation letter to the Fire District Secretary.

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS' APPROVAL

1. Upon receipt of the Company's recommendation letter, the Fire District Secretary shall place the applicant on the agenda for review by the Board of Fire Commissioners at their next regular meeting.
2. The Board of Fire Commissioners may conditionally approve the applicant pending successful completion of the required physical.
3. Conditional approval does not authorize operational participation, emergency response activity, protective equipment issuance, or unrestricted facility access.
4. Following conditional approval, the Fire District Secretary shall provide the probationary member with the conditional approval letter, required physical paperwork, and instructions for scheduling their physical.
5. The probationary member shall remain in probationary status until medical clearance is received and final activation steps are completed in accordance with this policy.

ONBOARDING REQUIREMENTS

Following conditional approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Company Fire Advisory Officers shall notify the probationary member of all onboarding requirements.

Probationary Member Requirements

The probationary member shall:

- Complete the required physical within 60 days of conditional approval prior to the issuance of gear and participation in operational activities.
- Complete ICS 100 and 700 training.
- Complete all required enrollment documentation for participation in the Vestal Fire District Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP). Enrollment shall be completed through the Firefly Admin web portal.
- Register within the NYS Learning Management System (LMS) to obtain a NYS Training ID and provide a copy to the Fire District Secretary.
- Read and acknowledge the Sexual Harassment Policy. Signed acknowledgment forms shall be forwarded to the Fire District Secretary for placement in the Fire District's records.
- Read and acknowledge all Administrative Operating Guidelines and the Standard Operating Guidelines.
- Read and familiarize themselves with Fire District Policies.
- Be provided access to applicable Fire Company Bylaws and membership information.

Administrative Setup

The probationary member shall also be set up with access to the following systems and resources:

- I Am Responding access through a Company Officer or an IT representative.

- ESIP e-Learning access through the Company Training Officer.
- vestalfire.com member portal access shall be coordinated through the Department Webmaster.
- Knox Box access and fuel card access shall be set up through the District Office.

Probationary members may participate in non-operational activities as authorized by the Fire Company; however, no emergency response activities, operational duties, protective equipment issuance, or station access privileges shall be granted until medical clearance is obtained.

FINAL ACTIVATION

Upon receipt of medical clearance by the Fire District Secretary, the following actions shall occur:

- The Fire District Secretary shall notify the Company Fire Advisory Officers of the probationary member's medical clearance status.
- The Fire District Secretary shall issue an official Letter of Acceptance from the Board of Fire Commissioners to the probationary member, with a copy forwarded to the Fire Company.
- After notification, a Company Fire Advisory Officer shall issue gear and equipment and request restricted key access to the Fire Station and District Office.
- The probationary member shall be placed into active member status.
- Confirmation of medical clearance completion shall be added to the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS

Medical information, screening records, and applicant verification materials shall be maintained separately and treated as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Access to such records shall be limited to authorized personnel with a legitimate administrative, operational, or legal need to know.

Background screening records and medical documentation shall not be distributed beyond those individuals with an authorized need to know.

COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

- Screening activities shall be conducted in accordance with NYS Executive Law §837-o.
- Membership approval shall comply with NYS Town Law §176-b.
- No applicant shall be presented for final recommendation or Board approval prior to completion of all required screening and verification activities.
- All application records shall be maintained in accordance with applicable records retention requirements.

PROCESS CONTROLS

- Screening and verification activities shall begin immediately following the interview process.
- No operational duties, protective equipment, emergency response activities, or unrestricted facility access shall be granted until medical clearance is obtained.
- All process steps shall be completed in the order outlined within this policy.
- Applications remaining incomplete for more than six months may be administratively closed.
- Applicants denied membership may reapply in accordance with Fire Company Bylaws.

PROCESSING GOALS

The Vestal Fire District shall strive to process membership applications in a timely and efficient manner. Actual processing times may vary depending upon background screening completion, applicant responsiveness, scheduling availability, and Fire Company or Board meeting schedules.

By Order of the Board of Fire Commissioners
Vestal Fire District
Date approved: June 24, 2026