



We Teach  
We Train  
We Serve Together

# Volunteer Information Guide



Join Our Team

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## **MISSION STATEMENT WHO WE ARE TODAY**

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**The Westlock Fire Department is a team of highly trained and caring professional volunteers who provide vital emergency response, prevention and education services that support community safety and quality of life.**

## **VISION STATEMENT OUR PREFERRED FUTURE**

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**The Westlock Fire Department will be a leader in our profession in service excellence, advanced training, employee development, use of technology and ongoing department evaluation to ensure community safety and quality of life.**

## Foreword

This handbook has been developed as a resource for those men and women interested in becoming a member of the Westlock Fire & Rescue Department. Participation as a volunteer member of the fire service will bring personal rewards and satisfaction, raise self-esteem and give you a tremendous sense of accomplishment for a job well done. Your involvement will also provide your community with a valuable service that has the potential to touch us all.

However, service as a member in our department requires a serious commitment. Your decision to join should not be made quickly. This recruitment handbook has been developed to provide the information needed to help you make that decision.

Committing to serve as a volunteer firefighter is a serious decision; we ask that you take the time to read this booklet and get the facts about what is involved in being a member of the Fire Department.

This handbook contains information on the organization of the Fire Department, training, participation requirements, the nature of our business, and answers to typical questions raised by prospective members. While this booklet will not answer all possible questions about membership, it will provide you with information about the most critical areas.

Once you understand what is involved in being a member of a Fire Department, we hope you will find you can make the commitment that the community requires. The service provided by Volunteer Firefighters is truly valuable to the citizens of our municipality, and we hope that you are able to contribute to our public safety.

## Goals of the Fire Department

The goal of the fire department is to provide fire and emergency services through a range of programs designed to protect the lives and property of the inhabitants from the adverse effects of fires, medical emergencies or exposure to dangerous conditions created by man or nature; first to the Town of Westlock; second to those municipalities requiring assistance through authorized service (mutual aid) agreements.

## The Nature of Our Business

Firefighting is one of the most diverse and challenging professions known today. This diversity inspires most men and women to enter the service, both as volunteers and career employees. Imagine training to prepare yourself to cope with situations, which range from structure fires, childbirth, hazardous chemical spills, heart attacks and almost any imaginable emergency in between. This diversity, coupled with the fact that your skills may be needed at any time of day, seven days a week, in any kind of weather, and very often under potentially stressful and emotional circumstances makes our contribution to our profession very personally rewarding.

Two primary purposes of the public fire service are first to prevent fires or emergencies from occurring. This is done through fire prevention inspections, fire safety education, and code enforcement programs. Second, we are here to prepare ourselves to control fire or emergencies should prevention not prevail. This is done through education, training, pre-incident planning, more training, state of the art equipment and even more training.

This type of work or job is not for everyone. 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 Department is not for the meek or timid or those who lose control of their emotions during times of crisis. Our service calls on its member to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.

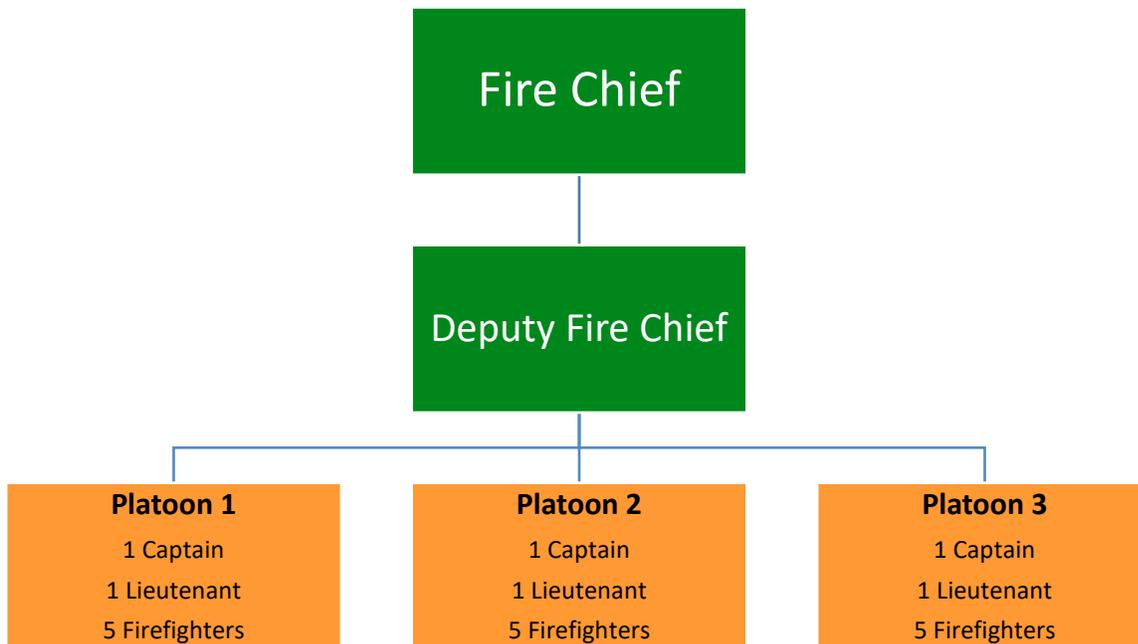
The personal rewards and satisfaction received from being involved in a Fire Department are often beyond description. There is a sense of accomplishment after controlling a building fire, compassion for accident victims, and fulfilment in teaching fire safety. The list could go on and on.

The bottom line in our business is measured by the prevention and reduction of loss of life, pain and suffering, and property damage that we have in our service. We are here and prepared for one reason, and that is to provide service to the residents of our communities.

If you feel you have what it takes to meet the challenges of our business, we welcome you to apply to join us.

## Organization

The structure and organization of the Westlock Fire Department is paramilitary. This type of system is not only traditional for emergency services, and it is essential given the dangerous work environment and the need for rapidly-obeyed orders.



## Primary Objectives of the Fire Department

In order to achieve the goals of the fire department, the following objectives have been established.

1. Identify and review the fire services requirements of the municipality.
2. Provide an administrative process consistent with the needs of the department.
3. Ensure that the firefighting equipment and operating personnel are available to provide an adequate response to a citizen's call within a reasonable length of time.
4. Provide department training to an accepted standard that will ensure the continuous upgrading of all personnel in the latest techniques of fire prevention, firefighting and control of emergency situations and co-operate with other municipal departments with respect to management training and other programs.
5. Provide a maintenance program to ensure that all fire protection apparatus, including all equipment, is ready to respond to emergency calls.
6. Provide an effective fire prevention program to:
  - a. Through plan examination and inspection, ensure compliance with applicable municipal, provincial, and federal fire prevention statutes, codes, and regulations.
  - b. Reduce and/or eliminate fire hazards.
7. Develop and maintain effective public information systems and educational programs, with particular emphasis on school fire safety programs.
8. Ensure in the event of a major catastrophe in the municipality, assistance to cope with the situation is available from outside departments and other agencies.
9. Develop and maintain a good working relationship with all federal, provincial and municipal departments, utilities and agencies related to the protection of life and property.
10. Interact and co-operate with other departments of the corporation respecting the aspects of fire or any given program.

## Training and Participation

Over the years, the fire service has evolved into a public safety agency providing highly technical and diverse services. The general public has come to rely on the Fire Department as the "first responder" not only when manmade and natural disasters threaten life and property but for seemingly smaller problems.

To ensure that all members of the Fire Department are prepared to deliver the best level of services required, training standards have been developed to provide each member with the needed skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to deliver fire and emergency services to the Town.

To meet the requirements of both Industry Recognized Standards and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety, the Westlock Fire Department trains to the National Fire Protection Association Standard for Municipal Firefighters. This format of training involves a great deal of reading and self-directed learning on the part of the firefighter. Firefighters must complete knowledge and performance-based testing to complete the requirements of an NFPA Level 1 firefighter within a 2 year time period.

Practice sessions occur every Thursday night (except for holidays), from 1900 to 2200 hours (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.). A minimum of 50% attendance rate is required at regular training nights by all volunteer firefighters (new recruits are expected to show initiative and attain a higher attendance rate). Certification training is offered throughout the year on weekends. Firefighters are also encouraged to participate in off-site courses hosted through the area.

On average, a person could expect to commit about 5 hours per week to the fire department. This would not include the first 1 to 2 years, where a great deal more time in self-directed learning will be expected.

Firefighters are also required to participate in on-call weekends from May long weekend to September long weekend, which may include holidays. This schedule generally requires a 1 out of 3 weekend commitment.

## Remuneration

Members are provided with an honorarium while attending meetings, training sessions and response activities.

## Expectations

We DO NOT expect you to have any experience, but we will work with you to provide you with the tools to become a great firefighter. You will need to start with a desire to help people and a desire to learn new skills and face new challenges. Our service is one that calls on its members to perform hot, sweaty, dirty, strenuous work, often in uncertain and hazardous environments.

Our volunteers need to be team players, respecting each other's roles and contributions. You need to be able to give time at the fire station and deal with occasional interruptions in your daily routine, dropping what you are doing at the sound of the bell to respond to the community's emergency needs.

## Job Specification

### 1. *General Statement of Duties*

Capable and able to respond to an emergency to perform firefighting duties and other related work as required in the saving of life and property.

### 2. *Summary of Firefighter Duties, Responsibilities and Working Conditions:*

- a) Covered by the Workers Compensation Board coverage.
- b) Covered with On-duty Accidental Death Insurance Policy.
- c) Hepatitis B vaccination is required.
- d) Must maintain a reasonable level of Health and Fitness
- e) A pager will be Supplied by the Fire Department
- f) Must maintain a Current First Aid and CPR certificate.
- g) A firefighter must be committed to continuous training in fire suppression, prevention and emergency procedures.

- h) **Due to reasons of safety, facial hair that may affect the integrity of the face piece seal of self-contained breathing apparatus, i.e. beards and sideburns, is not permitted.**
- i) A firefighter is responsible for performing various duties, under emergency conditions, frequently involving considerable risk, in a safe and efficient manner.
- j) A firefighter's tasks include routine duties in the maintenance of firefighting equipment and property, carrying out of specific orders and directions as received from a superior officer in the normal course of maintenance duties, training and firefighting.
- k) A firefighter must respond promptly, safely and efficiently to alarms, obey the orders of the officer in charge, share in the work that is required at emergency scenes, around the fire stations and when otherwise on duty.
- l) A firefighter must refrain from using offensive statements or language at the emergency scene, in and around the fire stations and when on duty in public.
- m) A firefighter will be loyal to their fellow firefighters, officers and the department, and at all times conduct themselves in a professional, compassionate and sensitive manner, remembering that he/she is in the eyes of the public while on duty.

### **3. Distinguishing Features of the Job:**

- a) Responds to fire, rescue and other related emergencies as required.
- b) Reports directly to duty/scene officers regarding activities at the fire ground or station.
- c) Reports directly to the Fire Prevention Division on all observed fire/life safety matters.
- d) Reports equipment deficiencies to duty officer.
- e) Completes investigation reports following an emergency as required.
- f) Completes regular inspection of assigned protective equipment and station wear.
- g) Demonstrates independence of judgement and action in circumstances of extreme emergency where referral to a superior for instruction is not possible.
- h) Demonstrates responsibility for rapidly and efficiently performing various duties under emergency conditions frequently involving considerable hazard.
- i) Carries out specific orders and directions as received from a superior officer in the normal course of firefighting operations.

### **4. Examples of Work:**

- a) Ensures the safe operation of all department equipment.
- b) Assists with salvage operations during and following an emergency.
- c) Assists with giving first aid or CPR to the injured.
- d) Assists with Fire Department pre-planning as required.
- e) Performs such duties as required to further advance public information, public safety and public relations within the department.

- f) As assigned, performs various maintenance and cleaning tasks on apparatus and equipment following an emergency.
- g) As assigned, conducts firefighting/rescue activities at emergency scenes.
- h) Inspects property at the scene of a fire to prevent re-ignition.
- i) Attends assigned training sessions to ensure accuracy in firefighting and rescue methods.
- j) Participates with in-service training as required.
- k) Ensures compliance with all health and safety matters in accordance with the Town of Westlock Health and Safety Program and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation, and Code.

#### **5. Required Knowledge, Skills And Ability**

- a) Considerable knowledge of modern firefighting and rescue techniques.
- b) Considerable mechanical aptitude.
- c) Considerable knowledge of the rules and regulations governing the fire department and the volunteer activities of the department.
- d) Thorough knowledge of Provincial Acts relative to the activities of the fire department.
- e) Thorough knowledge of the Municipality including demographics, major industries, elements and hazardous occupancies.
- f) Thorough knowledge of the operation of all equipment and methods used in combating, extinguishing and preventing fires and rescue activities.
- g) Thorough knowledge of First Aid and CPR.
- h) Agility and strength to do prolonged and arduous work under adverse conditions.
- i) Ability to react quickly and remain calm under duress and strain.
- j) Conscientious and dependable and co-operative.
- k) Must be the holder of a valid driver's licence and capable of responding to an emergency.

## Benefits

Our Members qualify for several benefits based on active participation in the department's activities.

These benefits include:

1. **Training**

If you have the commitment, we will provide all the training you require. We also offer specialized courses and training opportunities for those who are interested and dedicated.

2. **Equipment**

We protect our firefighters with the latest technology in personal protective equipment. All of these are provided at no charge to you, we only ask you to take care of the equipment as if it were your own.

3. **Social Events**

A very important aspect of the department includes social activities which help in developing a culture of brother/sisterhood amongst members. Some of these events include the Annual Christmas Social and Barbeques.

4. **Recreation Facility Access**

As a member of the department, you will receive free access to Town facilities to help you maintain a level of fitness required to be able to perform the physical aspect of our activities.

5. **Service Awards**

Service awards are presented annually to recognise members.

6. **Workers Compensation and Insurance Benefits**

The Town provides a comprehensive benefit package to members while on duty.

## Minimum Requirements for Application

1. 18 years of age;
2. Physically Fit;
3. Valid Driver's License;
4. Employment or residence within the municipality or reasonable response time to the fire station;
5. Proficient in English.
6. A clear Criminal Records Check in the **Vulnerable Sector** (no Criminal Record or other adverse information contained in any police information or records systems). You must provide a copy.

## Selection Process

The selection process will consist of the Following components:

### **Stage 1: Application Submission & Review**

All applicants are required to submit an **Application for Volunteer Firefighter** form. An application form is included in this package or available for download on the Town of Westlock's website ([www.westlock.ca](http://www.westlock.ca)).

Applications will be reviewed with priority being given to those applicants who demonstrate the following:

- ✓ Employment or residence within the municipality or reasonable response time to the fire station.
- ✓ Current First Aid and CPR Certificates.
- ✓ Valid Driver's License with a clean abstract.
- ✓ Permission to leave place of employment to respond to alarms.
- ✓ No criminal record with occupational relevance for which a pardon has not been granted

### **Stage 2: Interview**

Interviews for the position of volunteer firefighter shall be conducted by a selection committee which will include the Fire Chief and any others the Fire Chief requires to attend in order to perform a fair evaluation.

### **Stage 4: Job Specific Physical Appraisal**

Selected applicants will have the opportunity to complete the job specific physical appraisal component. The tasks are designed to reflect job related tasks required in the performance of firefighting duties. The purpose of this analysis is two-fold; primarily to provide you with a realistic idea of incident tasks you will be expected to perform and to provide the fire department with a base of skills pertinent to each candidate to plan future training evolutions as required.

Applicants will be required to submit a completed Consent Waiver and Release Form for participation in the job specific physical appraisal. The form is included in this package.

Sample tasks include:

- Charged Hose line Advance
- High Volume Hose Pull Test
- Forcible Entry Simulation
- Victim Drag
- Ladder Climb
- Equipment Carry / Vehicle Extrication Test
- Confined Space Test
- Dexterity Test

***Stage 5: Selection, Acceptance & Probation***

The selection of applicants is based on qualifications, and the ability to do the job as determined by the results of the recruitment process. The successful applicants will be contacted with an offer to be accepted as a Recruit Firefighter in preparation for commencing actions as a volunteer firefighter with the municipality.

Recruits are required to undergo a 6-month probationary period at which time training and mentoring will be provided. It is expected that Recruits attend and many training sessions as possible within this period.

Recruit Firefighters do not respond to emergency calls and do not have unsupervised access to the fire station.

***Stage 6: Promotion to Regular Member***

Upon successful completion of the probationary period, recruits will be promoted to regular member at which time a pager, uniforms and other fire department items are issued, and the member is expected to respond to emergencies.



10003 – 106 Street  
 Westlock, Alberta T7P 2K3  
 Phone 780.349.4444 Fax 780.349.4436  
 www.westlock.ca

**Volunteer Firefighter Application Form**  
 For prompt consideration, this form must be filled in completely and accurately, be legible, and certified as true and complete. If you require additional space for any item, attach a sheet of paper to this form. Please notify us of all changes of phone and address. If you cannot be reached at the number given, your application will be withdrawn.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname:	Given Name:
Address:	City/Town:
Postal Code:	Email:
Home Phone:	Cell Phone:
Next of Kin:	Relationship:
Contact #:	Alternate #:
Are you legally entitled to work in Canada? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Date of Birth:

**EDUCATION**

Level	Date Completed	Degree/Diploma or Highest Grade Completed	Major Areas of Study
High School			
Technical or Other			
University/ College			

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (start with current employer)**

Company Name	Position Held
Address	From: _____ to: _____
Phone Number	Supervisors Name

The information collected on this document will be used for the purposes allowed under the authority of the *Municipal Government Act*. The personal information that you provide may be made public, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Questions regarding the collection and use of this information can be directed to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Coordinator for the Town of Westlock, 10003 – 106 Street, Westlock, Alberta T7P2K3 (780-349-4444).

Responsibilities, Duties and Special Accomplishments (use additional sheets of paper if necessary):

Will your employer allow you to leave for emergency calls? Yes  No

Who do we contact to verify this: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name	Position Held
Address	From: _____ to: _____
Phone Number	Supervisors Name

Responsibilities, duties and Special Accomplishments (use additional sheets of paper if necessary):

Company Name	Position Held
Address	From: _____ to: _____
Phone Number	Supervisors Name

Responsibilities, duties and Special Accomplishments (use additional sheets of paper if necessary):

**CERTIFICATES AND SKILLS**

	Name of Program / Certificate	Date Completed
FIRE OR EMERGENCY TRAINING CERTIFICATES		

The information collected on this document will be used for the purposes allowed under the authority of the *Municipal Government Act*. The personal information that you provide may be made public, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Questions regarding the collection and use of this information can be directed to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Coordinator for the Town of Westlock, 10003 – 106 Street, Westlock, Alberta T7P2K3 (780-349-4444).

## EMERGENCY SERVICES EXPERIENCE

Agency Name	Date of Service

## RELATED SKILLS

A current driver's abstract and copy of your driver's licence may be required at your interview.

Valid Alberta's Driver's License? Yes  No  Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Demerits: \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's Licence #: \_\_\_\_\_

Air Brakes: Yes  No

## REFERENCES

Name	Address & Business Phone	Nature of Association/work relationship	Years Known

## PHYSICAL FITNESS PRACTICAL EVALUATION READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed as a sensible first step to take if you are planning to subject yourself to the rigorous physical fitness tests for firefighter applicants.

	Yes	No
1. Have you ever been bothered by shortness of breath?		
2. Have you had frequent bouts of respiratory problems, such as influenza, asthma or pneumonia?		
3. Have you any back, neck, knee, hip, or ankle problems that would prevent you from lifting heavy objects?		
4. Has your Doctor ever said you have heart trouble?		
5. Do you often feel faint or have dizziness?		
6. Do you frequently have pains in your heart or chest?		
7. Has a Doctor ever said your blood pressure was too high or low?		
8. Has your Doctor ever told you that you have a bone joint problem such as arthritis that is aggravated by exercise, or might be made worse with exercise?		
9. Are you not in good physical condition and not accustomed to vigorous exercise?		
10. Is there any good reason not mentioned here why you should not undergo strenuous physical testing, even if you wanted to?		
11. Are there any current or previous medical conditions you feel you should disclose in this application?		

**If you answered YES to one or more questions:**

- a) **Consult with your personal physician. Explain which questions you answered "Yes" to on this questionnaire and show your physician this sheet.**
- b) **You will not be allowed to participate in the practical evaluation unless you present a written statement from your physician indicating that you are cleared to participate.**

**RELEASE OF LIABILITY for PRACTICAL EVALUATION**

I, the undersigned applicant, acknowledge that I have been warned that undergoing physical tests described in the application information can be dangerous to my health, if I am not in good health and physical condition. I hereby certify that I have satisfied myself that undergoing such tests will not be dangerous to my health. I further certify that I accurately completed the Physical Fitness and Practical Examination Readiness Questionnaire.

To the best of my knowledge, I do not at present have an illness or injury of any nature whatsoever.

In consideration of Westlock Fire Rescue Services considering my application as a volunteer firefighter, I expressly agree that it is my sole responsibility to determine whether I can undertake such tests without danger to my health.

I release and discharge the Westlock Fire Rescue Services and the Town of Westlock from any and all claims, damages and actions of every nature for or in respect of anything done or omitted to be done in connection with the establishment or supervision of the physical fitness tests, or the advice as to their nature and possible danger to my health, whether or not such act or omission shall constitute negligence, and in particular from any and all injuries, including death, which may result from my performing or attempting to perform such tests.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_\_ at Westlock, Alberta.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Please read the following carefully before signing:**

I understand that the position of Volunteer Firefighter offered to me by the Town of Westlock may be dependent upon satisfactory returns from reference checks and successful completion of the probation period. I authorize the Town of Westlock to contact the persons or organizations listed in this application for the purpose of obtaining reference information including information contained in my personnel file(s). These persons are authorized to disclose such information.

I understand that it is a condition of my service to follow all established safe working practices and other policies of the Town of Westlock. I certify that the foregoing is understood and statements made by me in this application are true and complete. It is also understood and agreed upon that any misrepresentation, false or misleading statements, incomplete information or omissions by me in this application will be sufficient cause for the application to be rejected or my appointment to a position cancelled.

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

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