
**Ocean City Fire Department
Standard Operating Guidelines**

General Policies

Subject: Applicant Hiring and Selection Process
Effective: 02.03.2023
Approved: 09.28.2022
Section: 200.00

200.01 Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines and standards for the selection of qualified candidates to fill part-time and full-time positions. Basic principles exist for the development of a selection process that should result in the appointment of individuals who best serve the needs of the Department and the community we serve. A job-related, useful and nondiscriminatory selection process is dependent upon a number of professionally and legally accepted administrative practices and procedures, which include formal communication with applicants regarding all aspects of the selection process and formal written procedures governing the Department's selection practices.

200.02 Definitions

- A. **Applicant:** An individual who has submitted an official employment application with the Town of Ocean City for an advertised employment opportunity with the Ocean City Fire Department.
- B. **Candidate:** An applicant who has successfully completed the initial employment process to include all or a portion of written examinations, physical abilities testing and/or oral interview(s).
- C. **Probationary Period:** A predetermined time set by Town of Ocean City policy that allows the employer to determine if established benchmarks have been reached to continue the employment relationship.

200.03 Policy

It is the policy of the Department to maintain an efficient, effective and fair selection process for full-time and part-time applicants that will result in the appointment of those individuals who best possess the skills, knowledge and abilities that reflect personal integrity, high ethical standards, and necessarily provide the professional conduct and quality service expected of Department employees.

The Department will collaborate with the Town of Ocean City's Department of Human Resources to assure all legal requirements regarding hiring practices are followed during these selection processes.

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200.04 Equal Employment Policy

- A. The Town of Ocean City expresses its support and commitment to the principle of equal employment opportunity.

- B. It is the Town's policy to recruit, hire, train, and promote individuals, as well as administer any and all personnel actions, without regard to race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, status as a disabled or Vietnam-era veteran, status as a qualified individual with a mental or physical disability, familial status, sexual orientation or genetic information in accordance with applicable laws.

- C. The Department does not show partiality or grant any special status to any applicant, employee or group of employees unless otherwise required by law. The Town will not tolerate any unlawful discriminatory hiring practices and will address such prohibited conduct through its disciplinary process.

200.05 Administrative Responsibilities

- A. The overall responsibility for the selection process shall reside with the Town's Department of Human Resources. This responsibility and commensurate authority is granted by Town of Ocean City policy as approved by the Mayor and City Council. The Department of Human Resources coordinates all appointments to current job classifications.

The Department of Human Resources shall coordinate all application inquiries for full-time and part-time positions with the Career Division's Assistant Chief.

- B. Assistant Chief, Career Division, Ocean City Fire Department
The Assistant Chief of the Career Division, or designee, shares authority with the Town's Department of Human Resources on hiring/section matters and maintains the responsibility for administering the Department's role in the selection of personnel. The Assistant Chief of the Career Division, or designee shall be responsible for:
 - 1. Receiving and processing applications for all full-time and part-time positions as a result of marketing and recruiting efforts;
 - 2. Posting test dates and other critical information related to the application process on the Town's and Department's media outlets (i.e. website, social media...);

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3. Developing, maintaining and administering job related written examinations, panel interview processes, and other selection procedures;
4. Compiling scores associated with the testing process and notifying applicants/candidates of their status as a result of their performance(s);
5. Providing instruction to employees who participate as proctors/panelists to the applicant testing process;
6. Participating in the review and selection of full-time and part-time applicants;
7. Maintaining files on all applicants in the selection process in accordance with Town retention policies;
8. Establishing eligibility lists for consideration of viable candidates; and
9. Coordinating, conducting, and/or facilitating all aspects of the background investigation process for all full-time and part-time candidates.

C. Fire Chief

The Fire Chief is designated as the appointing authority of the Department and shall have the ability to:

1. Select/reject candidates who have been referred for hire by the Assistant Chief; and
2. Determine if an employee will be retained or dismissed during a probationary period.

D. Joint Responsibilities

Other activities, including but not limited to medical examinations, drug testing and employee orientations shall be shared responsibilities in coordination between the Town of Ocean City's Department of Human Resources and the Department's Training Section.

200.06 Recruitment

- A. The Department will employ a comprehensive recruitment and selection strategy to recruit and select employees from a qualified and diverse pool of candidates. The strategy should include:
1. Identification of racially and culturally diverse target markets;
 2. Use of marketing strategies to target diverse applicant pools;
 3. Collaboration with all U.S. military services seeking veterans re-entering the civilian workforce;
 4. Expanded use of technology and maintenance of a strong internet presence. This may include an interactive Department website and the use of Department-managed social networking sites;

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5. Expanded outreach through partnerships with media, community groups, citizen academies, local colleges and universities;
 6. Employee referral and recruitment incentive programs; and
 7. Consideration of shared or collaborative regional testing processes.
- B. The Department shall avoid advertising, recruiting and screening practices that tend to stereotype, focus on homogenous applicant pools or screen applicants in a discriminatory manner.
- C. The Department should strive to facilitate and expedite the screening and testing process, and should periodically inform each candidate of his/her status in the recruiting process.

200.07 Legal Requirements

- A. All components of the selection process will be developed, implemented, and monitored in accordance with established standards to insure utility and minimal adverse impact.
- B. All elements of the selection process will be administered, scored, evaluated and interpreted in a uniform manner.
- C. All selection process materials will be stored in a secure area when not in use.
- D. When selection materials are disposed of, the manner of disposal will be performed in a manner that prevents disclosure of the information therein.
- E. All candidate records related to full-time and part-time positions will be maintained by the Department after the selection process has concluded.
- F. Individual scores will not be disclosed to candidates.

200.08 Selection Procedure

- A. **Selection Criteria**
The Department shall actively strive to identify a diverse group of candidates that have in some manner distinguished themselves as being outstanding prospects. All applicants applying under a general announcement, and are not currently part-time employees of the Department, will be required to complete the entire process to be considered a candidate for consideration. Those individuals

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who are current part-time employees of the Department are only required to complete an adult dynamic cardiology assessment and interview. Those part-time employees who never had a comprehensive background investigation conducted will also need to have this completed.

B. Re-application

All candidates who have previously applied and were eliminated for employment consideration for good cause will be allowed to re-apply and be considered. The Assistant Chief or Fire Chief may rely upon previously gathered background, or medical information to eliminate a candidate from further consideration at any time.

C. Selection Elements

Minimally, the Department will employ a comprehensive screening, background investigation and selection process that assesses cognitive and physical abilities and includes review and verification of the following elements, unless other wise stated:

1. Application;
2. Preliminary background questionnaire;
3. Written examination;
4. Physical abilities test;
5. Oral interview;
6. Background Investigation:
 - a. Comprehensive background questionnaire;
 - b. Background interview;
 - c. Disclosure issues:
 - i. Driving record;
 - ii. School records;
 - iii. Military records; and
 - iv. Criminal history.
 - d. Medical Examination (after conditional offer of employment). The medical examination is based on NFPA 1582 – Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments; and
 - e. Drug urological screening (after conditional offer of employment).

D. Unsuccessful/Ineligible Candidates

1. Candidates not eligible for appointment will be informed in writing within thirty (30) calendar days of such a decision. Although a hiring decision is most often based upon a number of factors, the nature of the selection process enables a single procedure (i.e. background investigation, test scores, medical examination...) to result in the elimination of a candidate from

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further consideration. Ineligibility may be the result of, but is not necessarily limited to:

- a. Expiration of an eligibility list;
 - b. Failure to meet minimum hiring standards;
 - c. Acceptable, but not the most desirable candidate being considered.
2. The Department will maintain records associated with unsuccessful/disqualified candidates for a period of three (3) years. All materials associated with the application process of unsuccessful/disqualified candidates will be destroyed after the aforementioned retention period.

200.9 Background Investigations

A background investigation of each candidate, full-time and part-time, is conducted prior to appointment. The background investigation will include the verification of a candidate's qualifying credentials, as well as a review of a candidate's criminal record, if any and verification of at least three (3) personal references of the candidate, current and past employers/coworkers of the candidate within the last five (5) years to verify his/her personal integrity and high ethical standards, and to identify any past behavior that may be indicative of the candidate's unsuitability to perform duties relevant to the operation of the Department.

200.10 Disqualification Guidelines

As a general rule, performance indicators and candidate information and records shall be evaluated by considering the candidate as a whole, and taking into consideration the following:

- A. Age at the time the behavior occurred;
- B. Passage of time;
- C. Patterns of past behavior;
- D. Severity of behavior;
- E. Probable consequences if past behavior is repeated or made public;
- F. Likelihood of recurrence;
- G. Relevance of past behavior to public safety employment;
- H. Aggravating and mitigating factors;

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I. Other relevant considerations.

A candidate's qualifications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, using a totality-of-the-circumstances framework.

200.11 Employment Standards

Validated, job-related and nondiscriminatory employment standards shall be established for each job classification and shall minimally identify the training, abilities, knowledge, and skills required to perform the position's essential duties in a satisfactory manner. Each standard should include performance indicators for candidate evaluation. All candidates shall meet the minimum standards. Candidates will be evaluated based on merit, ability, competence, and experience, in accordance with the high standards of integrity and ethics valued by the Department and the community.

200.12 Probationary Employment Period

All candidates who meet the minimum hiring requirements and are ultimately employed by the Department must serve a probationary period as established by the Town of Ocean City's Department of Human Resources.