

# **Probationary Member Handbook**

For one year after you join, you will be considered a probationary (probie) member of this fire department. If you have no previous firefighting experience then you will wear a yellow shield on your helmet. If you are between 16 and 18 years of age, you will wear an orange shield on your helmet and be designated a Junior Member. Following your successful completion of Firefighter 1, and after approval of the Chief and Executive Board, you will be issued the black helmet shield of a firefighter.

## **General Information:**

Station 27 is one of ten fire departments in Franklin Township, Somerset County, NJ. Station 27 is part of Fire District Number Three (District 3) and we get dispatched to every call with Station 25 (Community) for emergencies inside District 3. We also respond outside of our district (mutual aide) into New Brunswick and other Franklin Fire districts at the request of other fire companies. Our apparatus consists of two engines, one squad, one air/support vehicle, three chief's vehicles and a van.

## **Credits:**

As an active-probationary member you are required to attain 35 credit hours each quarter (every three months). Credits are given for most activities at the firehouse including meetings, fire calls, training, and duty crews. For every hour you are at the station working you will receive one credit. For each call responded to, you will receive one credit and for each meeting attended you will receive one credit.

## **Fire School:**

During your probationary year you will be required to attend, and successfully complete, a state certified Firefighter 1 course. This course is taught at the Somerset and Middlesex County Fire Academies. Classes usually run two weeknights per week and some Saturday's. 100% attendance is required to pass and once you pass you will receive a state fire certification allowing you to enter a burning structure. For each hour you attend fire school, you will receive one credit.

## **Fire Line:**

The fire line refers to the fire officers that are responsible for all fire operations. The highest-ranking officer is the chief followed by the assistant chiefs, the captain, lieutenants, and the engineer and foremen.

## **Duty Crews:**

Duty Crews are groups of firefighters that standby at the firehouse in the evenings to cover calls that come in during the week where they perform apparatus checks, maintenance assignments, and train as a group. When you join you will be assigned to a Duty Crew to attend. During Fire School you do not have to attend since most of your evenings will be spent at the academy. Duty crews begin promptly at 1900 hours and end at 2230 hours. If you are unable to attend you must call your duty crew officer and advise him/her of your anticipated absence.

## **Training Officer:**

When you join the chief will assign one of the fire officers to you as your “training officer”. Often times this will be the officer of your duty crew. Any fire related questions you have should be directed to this officer. They will also see that you receive needed training during your first year.

**Riding the truck:**

Yellow<sup>[GW1]</sup> shield members are allowed to ride on the apparatus if seats are available. If a black shield firefighter is present and able to ride the yellow shield must give up their seat for the black shield firefighter. No more than two (2) yellow shields may ride on the same apparatus unless the Officer in Charge (OIC) approves it. Yellow and Orange Shields are not permitted to ride on any calls outside of District #3 (Mutual Aide). Seat Belts must be worn at all times when on any department vehicle.

**At the scene:**

Once on scene yellow shields must stay with the apparatus and it’s driver. On occasion the OIC or driver may give yellow shields a task on the fire scene (hitting a hydrant, putting up fire line tape, bringing tools to the front door, etc.) but under no circumstances will a yellow shield be allowed to enter a structure – even if the fire is out.

**Packing-up:**

Refers to the wearing of a Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA or Air pack). Yellow and Orange shields are not, under any circumstances, permitted to wear SCBA during an incident.

**Leave of Absence:**

Regular members are allowed to request a leave of absence in the event they will be unable to make their credits during a certain time period. Probationary members are not eligible for a leave of absence.

**At the Station:**

Probationary firefighters are not allowed inside the firehouse unless a regular member is present. Junior Members are not permitted in the firehouse after 10PM on school nights nor are they allowed to respond to calls occurring between 10PM and the start of school, or during the school day.

**Guests:**

Probationary members are not allowed to bring guests to the firehouse to “hang out” under any circumstances.

**Blue Lights:**

Yellow shields may not have or use blue lights to respond to the firehouse under ANY circumstances. Once fire school is completed Probationary members may apply for a blue light permit. Use of blue lights prior to this may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal from the Department.

**Meetings & Voting:**

Regular department meetings are held twice a month on the first and third Thursday of each month. All members are required to attend two meetings per quarter. Regular and Probationary members may, in some circumstances, be excused from these meetings. Probationary members are not allowed to vote until become a regular member.

**Mandatory Drills:**

There are six mandatory drills held each year that Probationary members are required to attend. You must attend at least three of these drills during your probationary year, but are encouraged to attend all<sup>[GW3]</sup>.

**Driving:**

Probationary Members are not allowed to drive apparatus. Members under the age of 21 years are not allowed to drive apparatus. The Van is an exception to this rule and it can be driven by those regular and probationary members over the age of 18 who have a valid driver's license. Once your year is up and with the approval of the chief you may begin driver training. You will also need to complete a pump operations course before being qualified on any of the apparatus.

**Tips for success:**

You have joined a closely-knit group of people that risk their lives together every day. To say that we know each other well would be an understatement. You need to remember that you are joining us, we are not joining you. Members of the department will be sizing you up to see if you have what it takes to get this job done. While the sign on the front door reads volunteer, you need to understand that this is a job and with it comes significant responsibility. Your actions while riding on the apparatus, and while wearing the department insignia on your uniform, shirt, and/or personal vehicle, reflects on every member of this department so you must adjust your attitude and actions accordingly.

The best thing you can do as a new member is to come around as often as you are able, listen twice as much as you speak, get a feel for the way things work, where equipment is located, and always do your best at every task you are given. If you take pride in doing the small tasks you are given around the firehouse (taking out the garbage, cleaning the Veros room, washing the apparatus) and prove that you are reliable, consistent, and attentive, you will be vastly rewarded. As experienced firefighters learn more about your abilities, you will be more likely to be chosen for important tasks than those probationary members the don't exhibit exemplary qualities. If you are a good probie, chances are you will be a great firefighter. Welcome aboard.

## The Probie Checklist

1. Turn Out Gear:
  - A. Boots, pants, jacket, hood, helmet, mask and gloves.
  - B. Meaning of donning and doffing your gear.
  - C. How to take apart and clean your gear
  
2. Air packs:
  - A. Components of an air pack.
  - B. How to assemble and disassemble an air pack.
  - C. How to change out bottles and ?O? rings.
  - D. Know how and where to check for hydrostatic dates.
  
3. Learn how to ?hit? a hydrant:
  - A. Tools needed to hit a hydrant
  - B. Know how to correctly pull hose off an engine.
  - C. Know how to wrap a line and where to stand.
  - D. Know how to flush a hydrant.
  - E. Know how to hook up to a hydrant.
  - F. Know how to open a hydrant.
  - G. Radio transmissions on when to open a hydrant
  - H. Know the hand signals on when to open and close a hydrant.
  
4. Learn the basic tools:
  - A. Halligan bar
  - B. Pike poles
  - C. T.I.C thermal imaging camera
  - D. Axes (flathead or pick head)
  - E. Honda Light
  - F. P.P.V gas fan (positive pressure fan)
  - G. Closet hooks
  - H. Ladders
  - I. Tool bags
  - J. Saws (K12 and a Roof saw)
  
5. Learn where the tools are on every piece of apparatus.
  - A. See foreman and/or officers to go over the trucks with you.
  
6. Learn the proper radio transmissions for the East Franklin Fire Dept.
  - A. 10-4 Message received
  - B. Structure fire- house fire
  - C. Lines - number of hose lines that are in operation.
  - D. Mutual Aid - other fire companies coming into our district to cover or help.
  - E. Fire Alarm - Activated Fire Alarm
  - F. Hazmat - hazardous material incident
  - G. Using basic terminology

7. Responsibilities on answering fire calls:
- A. If you are around, then respond, especially during the day. If you can complete the above instructions, then you will be a great firefighter. Just because you're a probationary firefighter does not mean you cannot do anything, we need you to be at every call possible, the academy will teach you the basics and we will teach you on how we operate at a fire scene. Riding the engine as much as possible and listening to the officers and senior members as they operate will contribute to your learning and experience level. As a probationary fire fighter you need to show the department that you're willing to always go the extra mile to learn and be apart of the team. If you have any questions please see one of the officers or senior members and they will gladly show you what needs to be done. Thank you for your time in this matter and good luck. Welcome to the team.

- It is easier to give blame than it is to take responsibility. Therefore, before we can have good leaders, we must each learn to be good followers.
- Now and always, we are either on the verge of greatness - or complete failure.
- You will determine the outcome. The success of this fire company falls in your hands. But, this is not a burden - it's an opportunity.
- If ethics are violated and you don't say anything, it's your fault. If there's stuff that's broken and it doesn't get fixed, it's your fault. And this is not limited to physical items. Fix it - or alert someone who can.
- Fortunately, each of us doesn't have to do everything. Each of us only has to do something.
- You as an individual, and all of us together as a team - have control of what goes on. We alone have the power to change the ways things are. No one is going to do it for us.
- Don't ever let anything, or anyone - prevent you from being the firefighter you want or need to be.

Be honest. Be proud. Be relentless.  
Show respect. Show integrity. Show enthusiasm.  
Smile. Have fun. Motivate yourself.  
Take responsibility. Take ownership. Take control.  
It starts now.