

What it Means to be a Volunteer Firefighter

Becoming a Member of the Greenfield Fire District



Prepared by the Greenfield Fire District
Board of Fire Commissioners 2006

This pamphlet was developed to help recruit potential volunteers in the Greenfield Fire District. It explains what being a volunteer firefighter in the Greenfield Fire District is all about and what you can expect should you join the department.

The Greenfield Fire District is always looking for new volunteers to join our brotherhood! Most people make the mistake in believing that they do not “fit” in a fire department - and that is simply not true. Being a member of the fire department involves much more than simply fighting fire – there is a job for everyone!

Visit us online at www.greenfieldfd.org

Equal Opportunity Policy

The Greenfield Fire District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age, or marital or parental status in the recruitment and admission of its members, in the admission of its policies and programs, or in the recruitment, appointment or election of its officers, employees, or members.

There will be zero tolerance for any drug, alcohol or any other illegal substance abuse by any member of the Greenfield Fire District.

About the Greenfield Fire District (GFD)

The Greenfield Fire District is composed of four sister fire companies: Greenfield Center, Porter Corners, Middle Grove and Maple Avenue. It is the largest and busiest volunteer fire district in Saratoga County running over 1500 calls in 2005.

The Greenfield Fire District covers a district of roughly 83 square miles with a population of over 10,000 people.

The district has sixteen pieces of apparatus ranging from aerial ladders, 3000-gallon tankers, brush trucks and EMS first response vehicles. The total 164 firefighters respond to all calls for help.

How you can Serve our Community

"Volunteering" in the fire service can have many meanings, and that's because there are many ways one can help out. For the purposes of this conversation, we'll talk about two main categories one can volunteer with the Greenfield Fire District: as a firefighter or as a member of the Auxiliary. While both have a multitude of different activities and unique demands, they are equally important.



When asked the question, "What do I have to do if I want to volunteer with your department," no two people will answer the same. We believe that many people have misconceptions on what it is actually like to volunteer in our department.

There is a fair amount of training that New York State mandates that you must take (all of this is free to you as a member of the company) to be a firefighter with the Greenfield Fire District. In addition to the state requirements, our district mandates that you take a few training courses, before you can be qualified as an

"interior" firefighter (a firefighter that can wear a SCBA and go inside a house that is on fire, you also must be at least 18 years old - per New York State).

But you do not have to be an interior firefighter to fill a valuable role in the department. A popular misconception about being a "firefighter" is that all a firefighter does is "fight fire," nothing could be further from the truth. Our firefighters train extensively with tools that allow us to "extricate" people from cars (via the Jaws of Life) – which require an entirely different skill set than fighting fires. The district also provides Emergency Medical Service (we have many Emergency Medical Technicians – EMTs) to our fire district and we also handle HAZMAT (Hazardous materials) emergencies as well. As you can see, there are many "hats" that firefighters wear and they do much more than fight fires.

If you don't want to participate in the fire protection responsibilities as a member, you can join the Auxiliary. The Auxiliary's responsibility summed up is to support the firefighters: for example bringing food to a scene of an emergency, or having a bake sale to help raise funds for the firefighter's budget. We believe that ALL tasks of the fire department are equally important – it is a true "team sport." Without teamwork, the fire department simply could not function.

What does it take to Volunteer with the Greenfield Fire District?

Firefighting is by nature a dangerous profession. As a volunteer agency, members can donate as much time as they deem necessary. As such, a member must be vigilant in honing his/her skills through training to protect themselves and their fellow firefighters. This seems contradictory to being a volunteer, but it's necessary to point out the seriousness of the nature of firefighting.

Members are required to attend at least 50% of the monthly meetings and at least 50% of the weekly Tuesday night truck checks/drills that they are assigned. Most members however participate much more than these minimum requirements.

For example, for any given month, you could potentially have 9 weekday meetings – that's not counting any training courses and additional events, and fire calls. The Greenfield Fire District is the largest and most active volunteer fire district in Saratoga County – as such, the time that members donate is obviously much more than the other fire departments.

While the time commitment may be larger compared to other departments - there is a GREAT feeling of self-worth and honor in serving the community and being able to save lives.



There is also a plethora of fund-raising, fire prevention, and other social functions throughout the district which include (but are not limited to) the following: the annual Halloween party, annual "Health and Safety" day at the Wilton Mall, annual fire prevention activities at local elementary schools, car washes, coin drops and chicken barbeques.

Another responsibility of our members that is hardly ever thought of when describing firefighting is the maintenance duties of our members - this includes both

the firehouse and apparatus. Preparing a firetruck for parades for example can take five to ten hours - and that's only one truck. Members also take care of the firehouse grounds - mowing the lawn, planting flowers, trimming bushes, cleaning bathrooms, waxing floors - this is all part of being a member.

Misconceptions about Volunteering and Joining with the GFD

1. How can I be beneficial with no firefighting background/experience/training?

All training is provided free too you and most classes are held at night to work around a standard 9 to 5 weekday job. While there are base training requirements you must meet, its up to your prerogative if you wish to complete more advanced training courses such as advanced firefighting classes, vehicle extrication, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Hazardous Materials.

Members are not expected or allowed to take inappropriate risks at a fire scene, especially if they do not have the experience, training, ability, and aptitude for a particular task in attacking a fire. As explained above, there are many jobs to be performed at a fire scene, and only the most experienced and trained members of the

department are assigned direct firefighting responsibilities in challenging situations. Other firefighters perform essential supporting functions. Remember that firefighting is a team sport - and only by working together can the department succeed!

2. **The Fire Department is just a "social club" to hang-out**

The fire department is a brotherhood, so there is a strong social aspect to the organization - but it is a highly professional environment. The Greenfield Fire District has a no-tolerance alcohol policy. All members take their membership very seriously and uphold themselves to high professional principles.

3. **"I don't think I have enough time to be able to join and dedicate to the department"**

Members are not expected to give up their careers and family life. Obviously, a volunteer's ability to respond to alarms is limited by being away from Larchmont for professional or personal reasons, being ill or injured, or having other pressing commitments that must receive priority. Answering calls is not a requirement for membership, only 50% of monthly meetings (six per year) and 50% of the weekly truck checks/drills (that's around six per year).

While our firefighters are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we do not have our station staffed - or require "duty shifts". Our members are alerted via pagers that each firefighter wears by the county 911 dispatchers. All available firefighters then have only moments to respond to the stations, get dressed and get the trucks on the road and respond to the call for help.

4. **"I don't think I would ever fit in at the Fire Department"**

The GFD membership is comprised of your neighbors, your friends and maybe even your relatives. They're people just like you with families, jobs and active lifestyles that still find time to give back to their community. The bottom-line is that if you want to serve the community, then you will fit in!

Members of GFD have a variety of professions: Local Business Owners, Computer Scientist, Auto Repair, Central Air/Heat/AC, Educator, Electrician, Medical Engineering, Executive Management, Farming, Health and Safety, Information/Computer Technology, Maintenance, Military, Plumbing, Police Officer, Retiree, High School/College Student, Transportation & Shipping

Facts about Volunteering

1. **Volunteers comprise 73% of firefighters in the United States.**

Of the total estimated 1,108,250 volunteer and paid firefighters across the country, 816,600 are volunteer.

2. **Communities served by volunteer firefighters depend on them to be their first line of defense for many types of emergencies.**

Volunteer firefighters are summoned to a wide array of emergencies across the country every day including fires, emergency medical incidents, terrorist events, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle and confined space emergencies, and other general public service calls. The public relies on volunteers to be their first line of defense in these emergencies.

3. **The majority of fire departments in the United States are volunteer.**

Of the total 30,310 fire departments in the country, 21,900 are all volunteer; 4,886 are mostly volunteer; 1,480 are mostly career; and 2,044 are all career.

4. **Services contributed by volunteer firefighters save localities across the country an estimated \$37.2 billion per year.**
5. **The GFD provides Fire Protection, Emergency Medical Services, specialized rescue services such as motor vehicle extrication and HAZMAT response.**
6. **There are many tasks/duties that are essential to a fire department's success, which do not involve advanced fire training - on and off an emergency scene.**

We believe that you would be very surprised to find out how many jobs require very little training and are essential to the success of the department.

7. **The GFD has a "junior firefighter" program where individuals under the age of 18 and above the age of 16 are allowed to be members of the department and receive training.**

The idea is that once graduated from the junior firefighter program, members will become active members, with advanced certifications.

The Application Process

The department only accepts applications from individuals who live in our district, or within a "reasonable distance." Under New York State law, no member convicted of arson can join any fire department.

Simply stop by any Tuesday night (our weekly drill night) at any of our four fire stations around 7 pm – and just grab a member and ask for an application – they will fill you in on the specifics of the application process.

Why Join the GFD?

There are many reasons to join our great department; here we list just a small number:

1. **Quality Training** - You provide the commitment and we provide all of the training for free. From local and county training, NYS certified courses, to regional and national seminars and conferences - we offer you the opportunity to explore every avenue of emergency services and train you to be the best at what you want to do.
2. **Dress Uniforms** - Look professional and show your pride in your dress uniform as you march along side your brothers in the many parades throughout the year. These uniforms are free to any member who has been with the department more than one year.



3. **Firefighter Banquets** - As a member, you and your guest will enjoy these events held to recognize the past years accomplishments of the department and celebrate how special our volunteers are.
4. **Social Events** - Throughout the year we offer a variety of opportunities for you and your family to get to know the other members of your department in a relaxing atmosphere. This includes conventions and parades, parties and fun fund-raisers!
5. **Peace of Mind** - We recognize that firefighting and providing emergency services is an inherently

dangerous business. That's why we take extra measures to protect our volunteers. A comprehensive Volunteer Firemen's Benefit program from New York State, federal benefits, and extensive supplemental insurance supplied by the Greenfield Fire District provide financial security to you and your family should you be injured or fatally wounded in the line of duty. There are also programs in place to help shoulder the emotional burden of dealing with the unfortunate circumstances that we as emergency workers unfortunately deal with.

Your experience as a volunteer firefighter provides an opportunity to serve your community, your neighbors, and your friends, at times when their lives and property are at risk. Your service is rewarding because you are helping when they need help the most. Words can not describe the overwhelming emotion one feels when a mother hugs in gratitude after you save her children.

6. **Fire Protection is also a very interesting field, applying advanced technologies and professional skills to help people when their lives and property are at stake.** As a volunteer firefighter, you will learn about: the engineering of buildings and their protection systems, the operation of complex fire protection apparatus, the operation of advanced safety equipment, first

response life support skills such as CPR, and leadership and teamwork under conditions of challenge and stress.

7. **Earn a Pension!** The GFD offers a pension-like reward system for participating in our great membership and service our community. Join and find out more about this program!

Additional Questions?

Additional questions regarding volunteering with the Greenfield Fire District or about this pamphlet can be answered by writing to the Greenfield Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners:

**Greenfield Fire District
Board of Fire Commissioners
P.O. Box 103
Greenfield Center, NY 12833**