

IDEAL CANDIDATE PROFILE & CHALLENGE STATEMENT



FIRE CHIEF

Southington Fire Department
Southington, Connecticut

Overview and Operational Information

The Town of Southington Connecticut is a growing suburban residential community of approximately 43,000 residents. Southington is located approximately 20 miles south west of the City of Hartford and lies within Hartford County.

The Department consists of 90 employees (33 career, 55 Volunteer, 2 civilian) with an annual operating budget of 4.2 million. In 2019, the Department responded to 2,368 emergency calls. The Chief is appointed by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Fire Chief serves as a key member of the Town's management team. The Department is a full-service fire/rescue agency but does not offer transport EMS.

As a combination fire service organization, the headquarters station, along with Station 5 on River Street are staffed on a 24/7 basis. Additional resources are supplied through the 55 volunteer members that respond to their station when an incident occurs.

There is an active and ongoing internal dialogue relative to the combination staffing and service levels provided by the department. This includes a discussion and understanding relative to retaining the current levels of staffing coverage and the respective roles and responsibilities of each group. It is essential that the new Fire Chief understands these roles and engages all stakeholders to develop a successful combination fire service team that can work effectively together to provide the expected level of fire service to the community. Candidates should not underestimate the magnitude of these roles and the expectation to engage this discussion. It's essential that the candidate has recent management experience with volunteer firefighters including training, fireground and administrative duties.

The **Ideal Candidate** will have the following experience, education knowledge, skills and abilities. It is understood that any individual qualified candidate may not meet all of these criteria.

- A Bachelor's degree (A Master's Degree highly preferred) in Fire Science, Emergency Management, Homeland Security, Business Management or Public Administration is required;
- A minimum of 15 years of municipal fire/rescue progressive experience;
- Five years of experience in a senior command position (rank of Captain or above);
- **Candidates must have recent experience managing personnel in a combination fire service environment;**
- Certification to the Level of Fire Officer II and Incident Safety Officer are required within one year of appointment;
- Graduation from the National Fire Academies Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) is preferred;
- A history of successful team building experience, including working with a combination staffing model and developing positive relationships with both career and volunteer personnel;
- Strong finance and analytical skills with experience in managing a municipal budget;
- Experience in collective bargaining including working to develop labor/management agreements;

- A commitment to the advancement of technology and utilizing technology to develop organizational efficiency;
- The ability to invite and engage partners while advocating for the Southington Fire Department's needs and service level;
- Strong public speaking, presentation, and promotional skills;
- Desire to be active and visible within the community and internally within the fire stations;
- Humility, integrity, and a strong public ethic;
- A "Big Picture" orientation and the ability to create strategic long-range plans;
- Respect and appreciation for the Board of Fire Commissioners and other elected officials who have diverse opinions and attitudes.

Ideal Candidate Profile

Southington is seeking a Fire Chief who can help advance the organization to provide an exceptional level of fire service to the community. It is essential that the Chief works together with the Board of Fire Commissioners and other members of the command staff to determine the best way to maximize limited resources within the context of the growing needs of the community. The Chief must collaborate with other town departments (e.g. police department, public works, town manager, and the schools) to succeed. The Chief will need to be an engaged, creative, and credible advocate for the organization. In addition, the Chief must be steward displaying leadership and strength of character to support the fire department and the Town of Southington for the common good.

The Chief must be able to **"think outside of the box"** and develop new ideas for obtaining and retaining our volunteer firefighting force as the Town depends upon this organizational component to provide the service level expected by our residents. The ideal candidate needs to have the understanding that working with this volunteer force requires a different approach than working with the staff career firefighters.

The Chief must be a strong leader, able to nurture positive internal and external relationships. He/she must also demonstrate understanding, empathy, and compassion while holding him/herself and others to the highest standards of integrity and accountability. The Chief must be capable of making timely and valid decisions that are in the best interest of our community. He/she must have extensive knowledge of master planning, strategic planning to identify inefficiency and foster organizational effectiveness.

The Chief must lead by maintaining a visible and active presence in the community and conducting her/himself, personally and professionally, in a manner that is highly ethical and above reproach. The Chief must establish and maintain a high level of credibility and trust throughout the department and the community, working with everyone, regardless of rank, with an even hand and a sense of fundamental fairness.

The Chief must have excellent written and oral communication skills. He/she must communicate effectively in a manner that inspires, motivates, and encourages cooperation and collaboration. The Chief must foster teamwork and promote positive morale within the department and establish an effective rapport and cooperative relationships with elected community, state, and federal officials while remaining both nonpartisan and apolitical.

The Chief must have excellent management and leadership skills. One of the major challenges facing the new fire chief/emergency manager will be to manage the fire department budget during a period when the state and federal governments are cutting grants and local revenues are being stressed by increased health insurance, pension, and education costs. Specifically, he/she must demonstrate the ability to manage limited resources within the context of a collective bargaining agreement, a set overtime budget and increasing service demand.

The Chief will need to coordinate and assist others in developing and implementing a long-range municipal fire protection and emergency medical services master planning concepts. The Chief must be willing and able to coordinate these efforts with neighboring communities within Hartford County, and must have the ability to include local businesses and private sector stakeholders in this effort.

Southington has a strong desire for its fire department to provide a high level of quality service utilizing the limited resources provided. The Chief should have appreciation and respect for the traditions of the department while pursuing the standards and technology that will provide superior service to the community for years to come. Towards that end, the successful candidate should be experienced in developing and implementing training programs, supervisory and performance accountability systems, and departmental policies, standard operating procedures and standard operating guidelines that are consistent with nationally recognized standards and best practices.