



Columbia Fire Department

Standard Operating Guideline ADM-042

Promotional Guidelines for Battalion Chief (Operations)

Effective: 06/06/11

Issued by Aubrey Jenkins, Chief of Department

Rescinds

Standard Operating Guideline ADM-042 Promotional Guidelines for Battalion Chief, Captain and Fire Equipment Operator 03/01/09

Purpose

To provide all Columbia Fire Department personnel a guideline for the promotional process for the ranks of Battalion Chief (Operations). This SOG sets forth the guidelines to be followed in making promotional decisions within the fire department. These guidelines are designed to establish a promotional system for the department that provides for the selection of superior officers based upon merit and fitness for promotion by job-related and valid selection procedures.

Scope

This guideline applies to all suppression personnel in the Columbia Fire Department.

Policy

I. Citing of Guideline

This guideline shall be known as the Columbia Fire Department Promotional Guidelines for the positions of Battalion Chief

II. Definitions

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this guideline shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this article, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

- A. Fire Chief: The Chief of Columbia Fire Department as appointed by the City Manager.
- B. Appointing Guideline: The selection for promotion of an individual from among a group of candidates determines to be eligible.

- C. Discretionary Ranks: Ranks to which appointments are not controlled by the provision of this guideline and to which appointments can be made at the discretion of the Fire Chief.
- D. Eligibility: A uniform employee who meets requirements for a rank and whose name is on an eligibility list.
- E. Eligibility List: A list of the names of employees who have competed for a rank of employment and are qualified to be appointed.
- F. Examination: Selection procedures used to assess qualifications of applicants for promotion.
- G. Human Resources Director: The Director of the City of Columbia Human Resources Department.
- H. Minimum Qualifications: The requirements established in the rank specification for experience and demonstration of the necessary proficiencies in a lower rank or ranks in order to compete for promotion.
- I. Non-Discretionary Ranks: Ranks to which appointments are controlled by the provision of this guideline.
- J. Probationary Employee: An employee who has been appointed to a rank from an eligible list but has not successfully completed a six-month probationary period in the rank.
- K. Probationary Period: A period of six-months following a promotional appointment during which the Fire Chief, in consultation with designated subordinate commanders, determines whether or not the probationary employee has the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the work behaviors of the rank at an acceptable level. The probationary period is considered a noncompetitive part of the examination for the rank.
- L. Process Manager: An individual who is appointed by the Fire Chief for the purpose of managing the promotional process. This person may be a staff member within the rank of Assistant Chief, an individual from the City's Human Resources Department or a professional consultant.
- M. Rank: A group of positions that have similar duties and responsibilities, require similar qualifications and can be designated by a single title indicative of the level of responsibility of the positions.
- N. Rank Specification: A written document based upon an applicable job analysis which shall include, but not be limited to descriptions of the responsibilities

and work of the rank; a description of the critical work behaviors of the rank and the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the performance of the work behaviors.

- O. Selection Committee: A committee made up of subject matter experts. The committee shall consist of officers in the ranks of Battalion Chief, Division Chief, Assistant Chief and/or Deputy Chief. Duties of the Selection Committee:
 1. Assist in validating tests.
 2. Review written test questions developed from the job analysis results for valid knowledge of position, readability, and fairness.
 3. Develop scenarios for oral review board from the results of the job analysis.
 4. Act as subject matter experts.
 5. Settle any challenge to the written or oral exams and respond in writing to complainants, to the Fire Chief and to the Human Resources Director.

- P. Status: The condition of a uniform member who has acquired a right to a rank in the manner established by this guideline and by the overall provision of the City's policies. This condition is retained by a probationary employee in his or her lower rank unless the probationary period for the new rank is completed successfully and status in the new rank is gained. Uniform employees who fail their probationary period shall be returned to a position in their rank in which they have continued to have status during the probationary evaluation portion of the examination.

- Q. Uniform Member: A career employee in the fire department as established by definition of the City of Columbia Human Resources Department as a fire fighter, and who has been certified by the Columbia Fire Department's Training Bureau as a firefighter.

III. Applicability of Guidelines

- A. These guidelines shall apply to promotions to the rank of Battalion Chief (Operations) within the Operations Division.
- B. Any changes to these guidelines shall be in writing and entered into this document prior to announcement for promotional assessment.

IV. Status of Present Uniform Members

- A. Uniform members in the non-discretionary ranks of Firefighter, Senior Firefighter, Fire Engineer, Fire Captain and Battalion Chief, on the effective date of this guideline, shall be given status in the non-discretionary rank they hold as of that date.
- B. Uniform members of the department holding discretionary ranks of Chief of

Training, Training Officer, Logistics Chief, Assistant Fire Marshal, Staffing Chief, Assistant Staffing Officer, Deputy Fire Marshal, Assistant Plans Examination, Public Education Officer, Division Chief, Assistant Chief and Deputy Chief on the effective date of these guidelines shall be given status in the discretionary rank they hold.

- C. If an employee transfers to the Operations Division from a discretionary position within the Columbia Fire Department, they will assume the last promoted rank they held in the non-discretionary position.

V. Amendments to These Guidelines

Amendments to these guidelines may be recommended in writing to the Fire Chief and/or Process Manager. The recommendations shall then be turned over to the Selection Committee for review. A written reply from the Committee shall be given to the Fire Chief and Process Manager. The Chief will review the Selection Committee's reply and approve or disapprove the recommendation. Any approved changes shall be posted at all fire stations.

VI. Creation of the Rank Specification

- A. The Process Manager in conjunction with the Selection Committee shall create and a separate document for each rank covered by this guideline. The document shall be known as the rank specification and shall be approved by the Fire Chief.
- B. A rank specification shall be consistent with the written position description developed by the Human Resources Director; however, the rank specification shall go beyond the written position description in defining the work behaviors of the rank and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform those work behaviors as may be required in the development of content valid examinations, in that the written position description is primarily a classification and pay document, while the rank specification is primarily an examination document. The rank specification will be updated on a five year cycle with the assistance from an outside consultant.

VII. Amendments to the Rank Specification

Prior to an announcement of an examination process for a rank, the Process Manager and Selection Committee in conjunction with the Fire Chief shall thoroughly review the rank specification and make any amendments to the rank specification deemed appropriate.

VIII. Examination Announcement

The Process Manager, in conjunction with the Fire Chief, will determine all eligible candidates for each examination. The Process Manager shall give notice of each examination at least 60 days in advance of the date of administering the first competitive part of the examination. The Chief shall post a notice thereof in all fire stations and e-mail all employees. The announcement shall state the rank for which the examination is being held, the official announcement posting date, the last date

and manner for making application for admission to the examination, the examination parts to be used in the competition with the weights for each part, the study lists, and any other information considered pertinent. The rank specification in effect at the time an examination procedure is announced shall be provided to all eligible candidates along with the examination announcement. A copy of the current rank specification shall be posted in the fire stations.

IX. Filing of Applications

All uniform members who wish to apply for a promotional examination must file a written application on the form prescribed within 30 days of the date the announcement is officially posted.

X. Minimum Qualification to Compete

- A. For the position of Battalion Chief (Operations), the applicant must have nine years of continuous service as a career uniform member of Columbia Fire Department, with the last three years in the rank of Fire Captain in Operations.
- B. The applicants must successfully complete the elements of the Columbia Fire Department Chief Officer Candidate Program as outlined in SOG ADM-041 by the announced cut off date of eligibility.
- C. Eligibility after demotions and/or separation from employment
 - 1. In cases where an employee has been demoted to a lesser rank the following will be used to determine eligibility for promotions. Demoted employees must wait a minimum of one year from the date of their demotion and must meet all required courses/training. The employee must submit a written request to the Fire Chief, through the process manager, requesting to be considered eligible for the testing process. The Fire Chief's decision is final. The written request must be submitted prior to the testing cut off date and the employee if approved will be required to test with all other candidates. Their score will be ranked with all other candidates, in order, on that ranks eligibility list. Previous time in grade and time in the department will count for these employees on promotional tests.
 - 2. In cases where the employee has separated from employment with the Columbia Fire Department and been separated for 12 months or more, that employee must start over at the recruit level and will be required to follow the promotional guidelines for rank advancement.
 - 3. In cases where the employee has separated from employment from the Columbia Fire Department and has been separated for less than 12 months, that employee must successfully complete their three and six month probationary periods. After that time, the employee may submit a written request to the Fire Chief, through the process manager, to be promoted to the rank of Senior Firefighter. The process manager will determine if the employee has met the required time and training for that position (from their past employment) and that information will be forwarded to the Fire Chief for

consideration. The Fire Chief's decision will be final in determining that employee's eligibility. If the employee's request is approved, that employee must meet all requirements for rank advancement above the Senior Firefighter position.

XI. Disqualification from an Examination Process

The Fire Chief shall disqualify a uniform member from an examination process when the Chief has determined that,

- A. The application was not filed within the period specified by the examination announcement; or
- B. The uniform member lacks the required length of service at a lower rank necessary to be eligible to compete; or
- C. The uniform member, after sufficient and proper notification, did not properly appear at the time and place designated for each part of the examination; or
- D. The uniform member does not possess a South Carolina driver's license; or
- E. The uniform member had a suspension of driver's license within three years; or
- F. The uniform member has been suspended two or more days (16 hours), whether consecutive or not, for violating the department's guidelines or City policies within 12 months of the last date for filing applications, and all administrative appeals relating to such suspension have been adjudicated. Should the Fire Chief disqualify a uniform member, written notification of the reasons for that action shall be given to the uniform member before the first competitive part is scheduled, or before a subsequent competitive part is scheduled.

XII. Examinations

- A. Examinations shall relate to those matters which will test the relative capacities and fitness of the uniform members to discharge the duties of the rank to be filled.
- B. The Battalion Chief applicant will successfully pass an assessment center process that consist of activities such as a supplemental questionnaire, a fire ground simulation activity, an in-basket activity and a structured oral interview. The weights of each part will be determined by the most current job analysis and listed in the Examination Announcement. The results of the Assessment Center process along with provisions of Section XVI. "Time in Grade/Time in Department" will qualify the applicant for additional evaluation for the position.
- C. The final phase of the assessment is the Executive Review Board. Applicants who successfully pass all parts of the assessment with the provisions of Section XVII will complete this final phase of the assessment. The Fire Chief will assemble an Executive Review Board who will conduct a panel interview and

review the candidates resume', education, work history, community service and other related skills. This Executive Review Board will award up to ten (10) points based on the interview scoring dimensions of the executive interview and review.

XIII. Rating of Examination Parts

- A. Appropriate techniques shall be used in rating the results of all examination parts and interpreting the relative ratings of the competitors.
- B. To the extent possible, the assessment will be completed as a blind process, which will conceal the identity of the candidates to the evaluators.

XIV. Minimum Passing Score

- A. In order for the name of a uniform member to appear on an eligible list, the uniform member must pass each part of the assessment center.
- B. Members who fail to attain the minimum passing score on any part of the examination shall be considered to have failed the examination and shall not be eligible to compete in any further part of the examination or to attain a rank on the eligibility list.
- C. The minimum passing score on any part of the examination, whether supplemental questionnaire, fire ground simulation, in-basket exercise or structured oral interview is 70 or greater. You must achieve the minimum passing score on each section to advance to the next step.

XV. Weights of Examination Parts

- A. If the examination process has more than one competitive part, the official announcement shall state the weight to be assigned to each part. The weights shall be stated as percentages and the total weight of all parts of an examination process shall equal 100 percent.
- B. All candidates passing all parts of the examination process shall have their final score computed in accordance with these weights and in accordance with appropriate procedures so that the weights are accurately reflected.

XVI. Time in Grade/Time in Department

- A. The applicants for the Executive Review Board shall be determined by the final assessment score computed as set forth in Section XVI of these guidelines as well as the addition of up to 6 raw points for "time in grade" beyond the minimum time in current rank and an addition of up to 6 raw points for "time in the department".
- B. For "time in grade", one points (1) will be accrued for each additional complete year of service in the candidate's current rank after the minimum is achieved. This "time in grade" points will be calculated from the cut off date of the examination period. No partial points will be accrued.

- C. "Time in department" points will be awarded for each year of service as a career firefighter in the Columbia Fire Department. "Time in department" points will be accrued at a rate of a half (.5) point a year above the minimum required for eligibility. This "time in department" points will be calculated from the cut off date of the examination period for complete years of service.

XVII. Rank Order on the Eligibility List

- A. The order of names of passing candidates on the eligibility list shall be determined by the final assessment score computed as set forth in Section XII of these guidelines.
- B. Final scores will be rounded off to two decimal points. If, thereafter, a tie still exists it will remain unbroken.

XVIII. Notification of Results

- A. A uniform member who competes in any part of an examination shall be given written notice of the results of each part of the examination unless examination parts are administered concurrently based on scheduling needs. The notice shall include the uniform member's score for each part; and, if the member passes, the member's rank on the eligibility list shall be given after the list is established.
- B. Uniform members who fail a portion of the examination shall be notified of that fact, along with their score, before the next part of the examination is administered.

XIX. Eligibility List

- A. The Fire Chief shall maintain an active eligibility list for all ranks covered by these guidelines. Each list shall contain the names of candidates who passed the entire examination process, with the candidates' final examination score and his or her ranking on the Eligibility List.
- B. Eligibility lists will become effective on the date approved by the Human Resources Director.

XX. Duration of Eligibility List

- A. Eligibility lists, unless earlier exhausted, shall be in effect for 24 months from the date the list was approved by the Human Resources Director.
- B. Eligibility lists shall not be extended beyond their expiration date, and all vacancies existing on the expiration date shall be filled from the eligibility list; however, the provisions of Section XXIII B. shall still apply.
- C. A new examination announcement, as provided for in Section IX., will be published within a reasonable time after a list is exhausted. When a new

examination announcement has not been published, a written notice explaining the reasons for the failure to publish a new announcement shall be given to the City Manager and the Human Resources Director. It shall also be posted at all fire stations and e-mailed to all personnel.

XXI. Appointing Guideline

- A. Upon completion of an eligibility list, the Human Resources Director shall provide the Fire Chief with a copy. For each position, the Fire Chief may recommend to the City Manager promotion of a candidate from the highest three rankings.
- B. When the number of names remaining on an eligibility list is less than three; the Fire Chief may decline to make an appointment and may request that a new examination procedure be administered. At such time, the eligibility list shall be considered exhausted in accordance with Section XX.

XXII. Removal from Eligibility List

- A. The Fire Chief shall remove the name of a uniform member from an eligibility list due to any of the reasons listed below.
 - 1. Receipt of a written request from the uniform member.
 - 2. Refusal to accept a promotional appointment.
 - 3. Termination of the uniform member's employment.
 - 4. Suspension of two or more days (16 hours) within 12 months, whether consecutive or not, for a violation of the guidelines of the department or policies of the City.
 - 5. The discovery, after the eligibility list has been established, that the uniform member would have been rejected under other provisions of these guidelines had the information been known before the eligibility list was promulgated.
 - 6. Failure to complete the probationary period, as provided in Section XXIII.
- B. When a uniform member's name is removed from an eligible list, written notice of such action and the reason for the action shall be given to the member by the Fire Chief.
- C. Removal from eligibility lists established under this article is not eligible for appeal through City grievance procedures.

XXIII. Probationary Period

- A. Every promoted uniform member shall serve a six-month probationary period to be regarded as an integral non-competitive part of the examination process.

- B. A uniform member filling a non-discretionary rank at the time of his or her promotion to a discretionary rank shall have the time successfully served count toward the required six-month probationary period should he or she return to the non-discretionary rank.
- C. The probationary period shall be used to closely observe how well a probationary employee performs the work of the higher rank, and for securing accurate judgments as to whether or not the probationary employee's performance meets required work standards. It shall be the duty of the Fire Chief to issue administrative guidelines governing the probationary evaluation process.
- D. Prior to the completion of the six-month probationary period, the Fire Chief shall decide whether or not the probationary employee will receive status in the higher rank. If the employee is deemed to have passed the probationary period and is to be given status in the rank, he or she shall be notified of the decision.
- E. At any time during the probationary period, the Fire Chief may remove a promoted uniform member whose performance does not meet the required work standards and return that member to the rank in which the member has retained status. In such event, the Fire Chief shall notify the member in writing that the probationary evaluation part of the examination has been failed and the reason for the failure. Thereafter, the name of a uniform member who failed the probationary evaluation part of the examination shall be removed from the eligibility list.

XXIV. Administration

The Fire Chief, in conjunction with the Process Manager, shall be responsible for the administration of this guideline. Issues that arise that are not specifically addressed by this guideline will be resolved by the Fire Chief in conjunction with the Process Manager in a matter consistent with the intent of this set of guidelines.