

Shelburne Fire Department looking for new recruits



Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

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New volunteer firefighters are encouraged to apply or contact the Shelburne and District Fire Department during the month of October, as they look to expand their numbers and enhance their capabilities.

Chief David Pratt said the goal of this recruitment drive is two-fold: more manpower and enhanced service to meet new requirements.

"We are a full-service fire department, so we respond to a lot of different calls," he said. "The province has put out something called mandatory certification, which is guidelines and requirements for training. So I'm working with our fire board that we report to to seek a direction as to what specialty rescues we are going to provide. Part of that obviously includes staffing."

The department currently has 34 volunteer firefighters and is looking to bring that number up to 38. Interested applicants do not require prior experience, and will receive the required training and certification through the fire department.

"We're looking for anybody that's interested in emergency services and providing service to their community," Pratt said. "We will do general and physical aptitude tests, just to make sure you have the ability to complete the tasks that being a firefighter will require of you."

The aptitude requirements include a strong desire to serve, effective written and verbal communication, compassion and a strong sense of responsibility. Physical testing will include stair climbing, hose dragging, forcible entry and search and rescue.

Once the aptitude and physical checks are cleared, firefighters will need to complete a six-weekend program that runs every third weekend of the month, over six months.

"After the training period, the Fire Marshal's Office would bring in something to evaluate and test our candidates, at that point they become certified," Pratt said. "It's about a six-month process from start to finish. I'm looking to get things started right in January. It'll start with some in-class learning, some get-to-know the fire service stuff. In February, it'll start with every third weekend, and those days will be wholly dedicated to learning the essential skills."

Some of the training recruits will receive during that time includes survival training, hazmat training, live fire exercises, PPE, working hoses and communication training. The training course will cover all the essential skills needed to become a firefighter.

Once candidates are fully on board, they can expect to be on-call for both urban and rural firefighting, and will be paid per call. While the service is referred to as volunteer, Pratt clarified that firefighters are paid by the call, and every hour of service is compensated. Payment also increases with rank and experience, offering opportunity and incentive to advance.

Pratt is looking to use these new numbers to expand the services his fire department can provide. While they might not realistically meet every single new goal on their own, the additional manpower will allow them to work with other fire departments to let each focus on their own specialities, and then lend each other their skills when needed.

‘I think everything can be attainable, but we will work with other departments to share resources,’ he said. ‘We’re picking and choosing our goals. For example, if we have a rope rescue team, and someone in the county needs rope rescue, we’ll be there, and vice versa for other specialties. Instead of trying to be trained on everything, we’re planning on mutually sharing resources and services. That way we can provide the best level of service.’

With a solid plan to enhance services, all Shelburne Fire needs is more people to make it happen.

An information night will be hosted on Oct. 29, starting at 6:30 p.m., at the local firehouse, located at 114 O’Flynn St., Shelburne.

Shelburne Fire is encouraging all those interested to attend, tour the facility and ask questions.

For more information ahead of the info night, the firehouse can be reached at 519-925-5111 or at sdfd@shelburne.ca.