



Governor's Fire Service Awards Manual

An informative guide for applying for the
Governor's Fire Service Awards

Prepared by the
Virginia Fire Services Board
Virginia Department of Fire Programs

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Governor's Fire Service Awards Overview

The Governor's Fire Service Awards were first established in 2002 as a formal recognition of excellence in Virginia's Fire Services. The awards are presented annually to recipients in five categories. Each category includes a volunteer and career recipient unless the recipient is a civilian.

Those categories include:

Governors' Award for Excellence in Fire Services

CRITERIA: An individual or organization that exemplifies an outstanding dedication to helping protect the citizens of Virginia against the devastating effects of fire or supporting fire departments who do so. Individual/organization that demonstrates exceptional dedication to sound management principles, excellence in fire service leadership, the furtherance of Virginia Public Fire & Life Safety Education, or a private/civilian entity who advances the fire service.

ELIGIBILITY: Any individual or organization belonging to a recognized municipal, state or DOD Fire Department, or assigned to a suppression force or team working directly for the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States Federal Government working within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Any private sector or nonprofit organization that supports Virginia's fire service or Public Fire & Life Safety Education.

Governors' Award for Excellence in Fire Service Training

CRITERIA: Any individual or organization providing lesson plans, support or delivery of programs within the Commonwealth which are fire service related. This award is given to an individual that has shown dedication, ingenuity, and commitment in fire suppression training. Nominees' activities must include contributions to the fire training process throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

ELIGIBILITY: Any instructor belonging to a recognized municipal, state or DOD Fire Department, or assigned to a suppression force or team working directly for the Commonwealth of Virginia or for the United States Federal Government, or organization working within the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Governors' Award for Outstanding Fire Department Response

CRITERIA: Any outstanding Fire Department Response made in the last year, that demonstrates mutual aid, integration of multiple system components, interagency interfacing and cooperation, or complex assessment or rescue. This award recognizes personnel that displayed critical decision-making abilities or engaged in similarly noteworthy actions that contributed to the successful outcome of an incident. The nomination must include a copy of the VFIRS report and a specific example showing what/how this was accomplished.

ELIGIBILITY: Any fire service organization.

Governor's Firefighter of the Year

CRITERIA: Any paid or volunteer firefighter that exemplifies outstanding performance and dedication within his/her own department to enhance fire safety for the citizens they serve. This individual would demonstrate efforts of furthering the safety, well-being, and care of citizens that promote notable improvements and precautions for fire safety.

ELIGIBILITY: Any paid or volunteer firefighter within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Governor's Chief Officer of the Year

CRITERIA: Any paid or volunteer chief officer that exemplifies outstanding performance and dedication to the fire service. This individual promotes outstanding leadership, innovation, professional development, integrity, along with superior service to the public and a high level of contributions to the fire service as a whole with notable record of service and achievements.

ELIGIBILITY: Any paid or volunteer chief officer within the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Authority to Issue Awards

The authority to issue the Governor's Fire Service Awards is derived from the authority of the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Office of the Governor delegates the authority to solicit candidates and make selections to the Virginia Fire Services Board and the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. The Office of the Governor and the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security hold the ultimate authority concerning the Governor's Fire Service Awards.

Governor's Fire Service Awards Timeline

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| Application Process | Yearlong |
| Applications Due | December 1 st |
| Materials Sent to First Round | 1 Week after Application Due Date |
| First Round Complete | 4 th Friday in December |
| Second Round Complete | First Friday in January |
| Final List to Governor's Office | Second Tuesday in January |
| Notification's Made to Department/ Entity | Last Friday in January |
| Awards Arrive from Supplier | Early February |

This schedule is subject to change depending on the needs of the VFSB, VDFP, and the Office of the Governor.

Role of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP), which serves as the training arm for firefighters in the Commonwealth of Virginia, shall provide both technical assistance and assist in selecting candidates for the Governor's Fire Service Awards. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs shall provide the necessary logistics and staff to assist in making the awards possible. This duty shall fall primarily to the Government Affairs Manager, who should be responsible for coordinating the awards process, maintaining the process, and other duties related to the Governor's Fire Service Awards. The Government Affairs Manager should work in collaboration with the VDFP Public Information Officer and other VDFP staff members to advertise the awards and maintain an application form online.

Technical Duties of VDFP include:

- Advertising the Governor's Fire Service Awards.



- Maintaining records of the Governor's Fire Service Awards that comply with all laws and policies of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Coordinating the First and Second Rounds of the selection process. Communicating with the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and Office of the Governor.
- Procuring awards from an approved vendor that meets the needs of the Governor's Fire Service Awards.
- Coordinating with the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association for the awards presentation.

VDFP shall also be involved in the selection of the award recipients. Historically, VDFP staff and members of the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) worked together to select the recipients of the Governor's Fire Service Awards. Two members of VDFP staff shall serve in the first round of the awards selection process. These two members shall be members of VDFP staff, of which one must have a fire service background. A fire service background is a staff member who previously or currently serves as a firefighter in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The other staff member shall not have an active firefighting background. A single staff member, not involved in the first round, shall also serve on the second-round panel. This staff member shall not have nominated any candidates for the Governor's Fire Service Awards.

These staff members shall be selected by the Executive Director and communicated to the Government Affairs Manager by the 2nd Friday in December. The staff members selected cannot include the Government Affairs Manager. Duties of the VDFP staff members shall be the same as VFSB members as outlined in the First Round and Second Round Procedures section below.

Role of the Virginia Fire Services Board

The Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) serves as a policy board appointed by the Governor of Virginia that has the responsibility for promoting the coordination and the efforts of fire service organizations at the state and local levels. The VFSB takes an active role in assisting Virginia's fire service and in the Governor's Fire Service Awards. The VFSB shall be the primary sponsor, in coordination with the Governor, of the Governor's Fire Service Awards. The VFSB shall have the power to make selections for the awards and alter the process in consultation with the Governor. Members of the VFSB who participate in the Governor's Fire Service Awards shall be selected by the



Chair and must take an active role in the process.

Two members of the VFSB shall participate in the first-round process as outlined below. Additionally, two more members, who did not participate in the first round, shall serve on the panel in the second round. VFSB members who are familiar with candidates for awards shall use discretion regarding conflict of interest. A member shall recuse themselves from considering nominations in an award category if they have nominated or have a working knowledge of candidates being considering in that category.

The Chair of the Virginia Fire Services Board shall communicate the selected members to the Government Affairs Manager by the 2nd Friday in December.

First Round Procedures

First round procedures refer to the initial screening of applications by members of the Virginia Fire Services Board and the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. The first round shall also create a list of the top three candidates in each category for submission to the panel as outlined in the Second Round Procedures. Participating members in the first round include two representatives of VDFP and two members of the VFSB.

The first round shall be a blind screening process. The names of the candidates, names of the department/organization, and other identifying information shall be removed from the application prior to consideration by the members participating in the first round. Members participating in the first round shall also not communicate with each other about their scoring. Each member shall be furnished with each candidate's application and scoring sheet template. First round members shall score each application using the selection criteria and submit this information to the Government Affairs Manager. All members shall submit their scoring sheets to the Government Affairs Manager by the 4th Friday in December. The Government Affairs Manager shall tally the scores and create a list of the top three candidates in each category. These candidates shall be submitted to the second round. The Executive Director of VDFP and the Chair of the VFSB may request to review the scoring process to maintain transparency.

Second Round Procedures

The second round of the process includes a review of the top candidates, as selected in the first round, by a panel consisting of two VFSB members, two members of the general public, and one VDFP staff member. As noted above, the VFSB and VDFP members shall not have participated in the first round. The panel shall meet by the first Friday in January and select the top candidate from each category.



The panel shall be furnished the aggregate scores of each candidate, their application, and supporting documents for review prior to the meeting. The panel shall meet, either in person or virtually, to discuss the candidates and render a decision. Each category will be handled independently, and a silent vote shall be taken once discussion has ceased. The Government Affairs Manager shall be present and oversee the voting. The winner will be announced to the panel once voting has ended. All panel members shall keep the winners confidential until the awards ceremony.

Members of the general public shall not have a fire service background and shall be selected on a first come, first serve basis. VDFP will solicit members of the public to join the panel via an online application. Members of the general public must also be credible and reputable citizens that will honorably represent the Virginia Fire Services Board, Virginia Department of Fire Programs, and the Governor of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs and Virginia Fire Services Board reserves the right to deny candidates from the general public if they are not deemed to be credible and reputable.

Application Requirements

Each application shall include the following documents:

- A completed application form on the VDFP website.
- At least one letter of recommendation.
- A VFIRS, NFIRS, or NERIS Report for outstanding fire department response.

For any application that involves operational or administrative components of a fire department or fire company, the Fire Chief or their designee must be listed in the application and will be contacted for approval of the application by the Department of Fire Programs. The Fire Chief or their designee must approve the application, or the applicant will be ineligible for the award. The Fire Chief or their designee will have thirty (30) days, or the amount of time until the application closes if within thirty (30) days of the application due date, to confirm approval or disapproval. If no contact is made, the application will be processed without consideration from the Fire Chief or their designee.

All application requirements must be submitted at the same time in a single email, including all supporting documents, to the Government Affairs Division through the email indicated below:

policyoffice@vdfp.virginia.gov



Documents submitted after the initial submission may not be considered.

Additional supporting documents, including resumes, additional letters of recommendation, news articles, awards citations, and any other pertinent information is encouraged. Awards selection group members of VDFP, the VFSB, and the general public will have access to all documents and will make decisions based on all documents available to the selection team.



Notification Procedures

After the panel in the Second Round renders a decision and it is processed by the Department of Fire Programs, names will be provided to for approval by the Office of the Governor.

VDFP staff will provide notification to the highest-ranking official of the department or entity, the award recipient, and the nominee that they are receiving a Governors Fire Service Award. Details should include the date, time and place of the award ceremony with an invitation to guests.

Review

This document was last reviewed and adopted by the Virginia Fire Services Board on June 6th, 2025.

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| Keith Johnson Chair Virginia Fire Services Board | L. Brad Creasy Executive Director Virginia Department of Fire Programs |

