

Prospective Member Information



Welcome

- Welcome to the Arbutus Volunteer Fire Department. We appreciate your consideration.

History

- Arbutus VFD was founded in 1937
- Mission statement: To provide superior fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the Arbutus and surrounding communities. We strive to protect life, property, and the environment through intervention, prevention, education, training, and community involvement.
- We provide fire, rescue, EMS, and Swiftwater Rescue to our community through the Baltimore County Fire Department
- We are a volunteer organization with some paid drivers. We respond to approximately 3200 calls per year. We are one of the busiest and most successful volunteer firefighting organizations in Baltimore County and the state.
- We have an Administrative Side led by our President, who is responsible for the business aspects of the Department. We have a Fireline Side led by our Captain who handles day-to-day and emergency operations. We also have an Auxiliary; men and women who do not wish to be active firefighters/EMT's, but wish to support the department through fundraisers, and via direct support, such as preparing meals for crews after long calls. The Board of Directors provides oversight to all of these.
- We have a proud tradition of service to the community. If you wish to join us, our expectations are that you will:
 - Serve the community with the integrity, honor, and respect that is part of our tradition.
 - Pay annual dues of \$12
 - Respect and maintain all AVFD property, including the building, grounds, equipment, and any property entrusted to you, which may include keys, pager, and turnout gear
 - Respect the other members, the chain of command, and officers
 - Be willing to learn and grow
 - Support the AVFD through you time and efforts in our fundraising activities.
 - Operate at emergency scenes as part of a team, not as an individual, with safety as your utmost concern

Administrative Operations, Application Process, LOSAP, and Dues

- The membership will vote on you for a 365-day probationary membership.
- In order to be considered for a vote for permanent membership after 1 year, you must accumulate 50 Length of Service Award Program Points. This is a Maryland state system to track your service time. Points accumulate for everything you do here, including emergency calls, meetings, fundraising, training, duty time, and sleep-ins. It is important that you document your time in the LOSAP book in the radio room. If you do not have 50 points, you cannot be voted for permanent membership.
- After 3 years of service with at least 50 points per year, you become eligible for a MD state tax deduction of \$3,500.00, which will continue as long as you acquire 50 points per year. After 25 years of service, you become a life member, and are eligible for a monthly stipend.
- Attendance for your probationary membership vote is not required. If you attend the next Business Meeting, you will be invited in following a successful vote. You will sign the attendance book as a probationary member. The Financial Secretary will assign you a 6 digit LOSAP number, and will confirm this with you via mail. You will be given a membership packet that includes the bylaws and membership handbook. A mentor will be assigned to you to explain the basics of membership and firehouse operations. You may also obtain a key to the department with a \$6.00 deposit
- A portion of your application fee covered \$12 for dues covering you to the last day of December for the current year. It is your responsibility to pay \$12 dues for the next calendar year before the last business meeting of December. If you fail to do this, you will be dropped from the membership roles and must reapply, which will be a significant inconvenience for you. Dues are payable at any regular business meeting. Dues may be paid in advance, and many members find it very advantageous to pay at least one additional year, in the event that weather or unforeseen circumstances prevent them from attending the final meeting/s of December.

Fundraising

- The Arbutus VFD owns this property, land, building, apparatus, and equipment.
- We receive some subsidies and grant funds, but the majority of our income is from donations and fundraising
- Operating a fire department is expensive.
- As a member, you will be expected to assist and participate in fundraising events to support this department

Emergency Operations

- The requirements to ride are outlined in the Membership Handbook. Initially, you will need Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness, HAZMAT Operations, CPR, and Hepatitis B vaccine/waiver in order to ride as an observer on the engines/squad/ambulance
- Your time availability, interest, and engagement will determine how rapidly you progress. If you introduce yourself to members and express interest in learning and training, you will progress more rapidly.
- We encourage cross training between fire, rescue, and EMS, but we will not force you
- We encourage you to participate with a duty crew of members who regularly come to the station on certain days and times.
- Training and learning is a lifelong process.

Safety and Wellness

- There are responsibilities, stresses, and potential hazards associated with training and fireground operations. We have high safety standards, but the potential for injury is a part of the fire service. If you are injured in the firehouse or on the fireground, you need to inform an officer immediately
- Fireground operations are physically and mentally demanding. It is important that you discuss these activities with your doctor. If you have any health issues, (e.g. injuries, medications) either permanent or temporary that could interfere with your well-being on an emergency scene, you need to be honest about your capabilities and should talk with an officer.
- There is potential for you to witness scenes of tragedy on the fireground that may be greatly disturbing to you. This is especially true of incidents involving children, abuse, mass casualty, or dismemberment of a victim. Baltimore County Fire Department has Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) resources available to address such cases. If you are disturbed by something you experience, please inform your officer so that appropriate resources can be activated. CISD is most effective when implemented within 24 hours of the incident.
- The AVFD lifestyle needs to be balanced with your family, spouse, children, job/school, and your personal responsibilities. The firehouse is not an escape from responsibilities and problems. We encourage you to talk with your family/friends/employer about your involvement with the AVFD, and to discuss expectations.
- No tolerance for dangerous actions or carelessness
- We do not discriminate against age, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation. We take these issues seriously and require all our members to take fair practices training.
- There is a security system throughout this building. We have no tolerance for behavior that is criminal or detrimental to this department.
- We take vehicle safety very seriously. Your personal vehicle is not an emergency vehicle. You are expected to obey all traffic and safety laws when you are responding to the department. You may not flash your lights or honk your horn to move through traffic. You may not install unauthorized flashing lights and sirens on your vehicle. There is no freelancing (e.g. you do not bypass the department to respond directly to a scene and act alone)

For members 16-18 with their parent/guardian present

- The fire department demands a high degree of professionalism and maturity. This is a very exciting but very demanding environment. It is vital that you keep a healthy perspective on priorities.
- We have some specific rules pertaining to members under 18:
 - Cannot be at the firehouse during school hours
 - Must have permission to sleep in and cannot sleep in on school nights
 - Must maintain a C average in school to be at firehouse and/or ride
 - Must submit quarterly report cards to verify grades
- Academic success is more important than the firehouse. We value your interest and efforts, but your education must be your higher priority. The Captain will maintain contact with you parents/guardian. If the Captain and/or your parents believe that the firehouse is interfering with your academic success, you will be asked to take a break from the firehouse and concentrate on your school work until you improve your grades.