

# Myrtle Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Policy

## *10-36 Chaplaincy Program*

Created: 2/2022

Reviewed: 2/2022



## Purpose

The chaplaincy program is designed to support the members of the Myrtle Beach Fire Department with their mental, emotional and spiritual needs, and to assist incident victims.

## Procedure

### 1) Appointment:

The Fire Department Chaplain will be appointed in writing by the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief may also, at his discretion, appoint one or more Assistant Chaplains.

### 2) Qualifications & Training:

- a) Minimum qualifications and training for the Fire Chaplain are as follows:
  - i) Ordained priest, pastor, minister, imam, rabbi, or equivalent
  - ii) Endorsement from his or her religious body, in which he/she is a member in good standing
  - iii) Member of the Federation of Fire Chaplains
  - iv) Before the Fire Chaplain can respond to emergency scenes, either he/she must be a certified firefighter, or complete basic classes on fire ground operations, safety, situational awareness etc. as determined by the Fire Chief.
- b) Minimum qualifications for Assistant Chaplains, if appointed:
  - i) Class SCFA 2110 Essentials of Fire Chaplaincy (within 12 months of appointment)
  - ii) If responding to emergency scenes, must be a certified firefighter or complete basic classes on fire ground operations, safety, situational awareness etc. as determined by the Fire Chief.
- c) Additional recommended qualifications and training:
  - i) Member of the South Carolina Public Safety Chaplains Association
  - ii) Advanced chaplaincy classes, e.g. death notifications; comprehensive acute stress management; dealing with difficult deaths; ethics; etc.
  - iii) Critical incident stress management
  - iv) Counseling

### 3) Chain of Command:

The Fire Chaplain will normally report to the Division Chief of Administration, with the following two exceptions:

- a) If urgency, severity or sensitivity of an issue dictates, the Fire Chaplain may report directly to the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief.
- b) The Fire Chaplain will report to the incident commander when operating on incident scenes.

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Assistant Chaplains, if appointed, will report to the Fire Chaplain for scheduling, general supervision and training; and to the Division Chief of Administration for all other matters.

#### 4) **Uniform & PPE:**

The Fire Chaplain and Assistant Chaplain(s) will wear department class A uniforms, and utilize the same PPE as all emergency personnel, with the following exceptions:

- i) For hospital visits, off-duty firehouse visits, other non-incident activities, or when at incidents but not entering the incident perimeter, the Fire Chaplain may wear either the class D uniform, or a black polo shirt with white “Fire Chaplain” embroidery, as well as a baseball cap with “MBFD Chaplain” embroidery.
- ii) When within the perimeter of an incident scene, the Fire Chaplain will be expected to wear and utilize the same PPE as fire personnel would be expected to wear and utilize when in the same location and/or performing the same activities. The Fire Chaplain should have a portable radio on him/her at all times while en-route to, and on scene of an incident for safety reasons and to be aware of fire ground needs such as injured firefighters.
- iii) When wearing class A, B, or C uniform, the Fire Chaplain will wear a chaplain’s badge and religious collar insignia (e.g. Christian cross, crescent, or star of David) in place of the collar brass.
- iv) If the Chaplain is an active full-time member of the Myrtle Beach Fire Department, he/she will wear the appropriate number of stripes according to his/her rank on the class A coat, and on-scene wear a helmet with the rank-appropriate color and shield. If the Chaplain is retired or not a full-time fire department member, his/her class A uniform will follow FFC (Federation of Fire Chaplains) guidelines which is three stripes, and for on-scene operations a white helmet with Chaplain shield.
- v) Assistant Chaplains, if appointed, will wear their normal class A uniform with the addition of a chaplain’s badge.

#### 5) **Routine Duties:**

- a) The Fire Chaplain will pray daily for the safety of all fire personnel.
- b) The Fire Chaplain will be available for invocations and benedictions at fire department functions, incl. recruit graduations, retirements, awards ceremonies, etc.
- c) The Fire Chaplain, if requested and at his or her discretion, may be available to officiate at fire department member’s weddings, baptisms, or funerals of close family members.
- d) The Fire Chaplain will periodically visit firehouses and be available to speak with fire department members, to provide a listening ear without judgment or criticism, and maintain full confidentiality, which is also guaranteed by state law.
- e) If requested by a fire department member, the Fire Chaplain may be of help with counseling during difficult life situations, e.g. financial distress, relationship issues, work issues (stress, burnout, conflict with co-worker), injury or death of a family member etc.
- f) If requested by a fire department member, the Fire Chaplain may provide spiritual support and guidance.

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- g) The Fire Chaplain may, at his/her discretion, visit hospitalized fire department members to offer mental, spiritual and practical support.
- h) The Fire Chaplain will work with the FAST team to provide help with CISM as needed.
- i) Assistant Chaplains, if appointed, will perform some or all of the above duties as determined by the Fire Chaplain and Division Chief of Administration.

### 6) **Incident Duties:**

The Fire Chaplain, when available, will respond to:

- All 2<sup>nd</sup> or higher alarm fires
- Working 1<sup>st</sup> alarm fires, MCI's and other large incidents at the discretion of the Fire Chaplain

Chaplain

- When specifically called by dispatch or the incident commander.

When off-duty, Assistant Chaplains will only respond to incidents if requested by dispatch, the incident commander or the Fire Chaplain.

When on scene, the Fire Chaplain will report to the incident commander.

On-scene duties, in the order of priority are:

- a) If the Fire Chaplain has emergency scene responsibilities, they always have highest priority. Examples: rescues, incident command functions, or duties as part of a specialized team (IMT, CSAR, etc).
- b) If the Fire Chaplain is on-call for rehab or fire investigation, this has priority over chaplaincy duties.
- c) If a) and b) do not apply, then on arrival, the Fire Chaplain will first pray for the safety of all responders and persons involved in the incident.
- d) During the course of the incident, should a firefighter get injured, the Fire Chaplain will be there to support that firefighter and go to the hospital with him or her if an ER visit is necessary. This may extend to notifying family members in case of severe injury and providing support for them.
- e) The Fire Chaplain should find the incident victims or persons affected and be there for them and help them with the following:
  - i) Emotional and spiritual support
  - ii) Explanation of fire ground activities
  - iii) Liaison to the IC and fire investigator
  - iv) offer prayer if desired
  - v) Assist in contacting the victim's support network, such as family members, friends, their minister or church members, etc.
  - vi) Assist them with meeting physical needs such as getting out of the elements, providing food, water, clothing and shelter
- f) If there are no fire personnel injuries and no victims or affected persons on scene to take care of, then the Fire Chaplain may assist the on-call rehab officer, assist with the fire investigation or otherwise help the on-scene personnel.

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### 7) **LODD Duties:**

The Fire Chaplain (and Assistant Chaplains if appointed) will assist the Fire Chief in any way needed after a line-of-duty-death has occurred within the Myrtle Beach Fire Department. General duties are listed below; more details can be found in the LODD policy.

- a) Preplanning of LODD roles, responsibilities, actions, equipment and facilities
- b) Notification of the family
- c) Emotional and spiritual support for the family and fire personnel
- d) Assisting in organizing the viewing, funeral and/or memorial service
- e) Assist, and coordinate with the honor guard
- f) If requested by the family, giving a testimony at the funeral service, offer a prayer or deliver the eulogy
- g) Follow-up with the family and fire personnel in the days and weeks following the incident, and provide support as needed.

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