

Constitution and By-Laws
of the
North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department
North Zulch, Texas

Effective: Jan. 8, 2018 - Readopted July 16, 2025

ARTICLE I
NAME AND OBJECTIVE

This organization shall be known as the North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department ("NZVFD"). The objective of this organization shall be to provide the highest quality fire prevention, fire suppression, and be subject to call for other emergencies as they may arise within North Zulch and the surrounding areas.

ARTICLE II
QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS

All members of this department shall be United States Citizens, at least 18 years of age and be of good moral character. All new members must reside within the NZVFD area. Members must have resided within the boundaries for at least 90 days. Each new candidate for membership shall complete a NZVFD application for membership and shall have a valid Texas Driver's License. Candidates also shall have a good driving record and no felony convictions nor currently be under court supervision. Background checks will be performed by NZVFD. Candidates and members are subject to drug and/or alcohol testing. Candidates shall attend three consecutive meetings or show proof of work obligations when a meeting is missed and shall be voted on at the next regular business meeting where a majority of the members are present and must receive a majority of votes of those present. Newly elected members shall be on probation for a period of 180 days, after which a second vote shall be held to determine the continuation of membership. Once a firefighter is accepted in to the department, he/she is encouraged to have a Class B Texas Driver's License.

Should a member no longer reside within the NZVFD service area, the member shall initiate written request to the Disciplinary Board requesting a waiver of this condition, stating their address, distance from the station, and extra-ordinary reason(s) why they wish to remain on the NZVFD. The Disciplinary Board shall review the request and add their decision into the minutes of the next regular business meeting of the department. Current members as of the date of this update are grandfathered and those members' names and addresses shall be recorded in the next regular business meeting minutes to reflect such.

ARTICLE III
OFFICERS

The Officers of the department shall consist of a Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Secretary, Treasurer, Captain, Lieutenant and Training Coordinator. Who will serve a term of two (2) years. Secretary, Treasurer and Training Coordinator may also hold the position of Captain or Lieutenant. One person shall not hold more than one position at a time of Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Secretary, and/or Treasurer.

ARTICLE IV
MEETINGS

A regular business meeting will be held on the first Monday of each month, unless a city-observed holiday falls on that date. A short business meeting may be held prior to training on the second and third Monday of each month, which shall be considered the mandatory training meetings of the month. All business handled at the meeting will be recorded by the department Secretary and the minutes will be read at the next meeting. A quorum of at least one half of recorded members shall be required for the department to vote on new membership(s) or by-law changes. Each Training Drill may consist of at least two (2) hours. The Chief and Assistant Chief can call special meetings as deemed necessary. Disciplinary Board meetings will be held monthly, at least 15 minutes before the regular monthly business meeting scheduled on the first Monday of each month, unless postponed due to a holiday or other incident. Other meetings of the Disciplinary Board may be called as needed by the Fire Chief or Assistant Fire Chief.

ARTICLE V **AMENDMENTS**

By-Laws may be amended at any regular meeting by submitting the amendment in writing. The proposed amendments shall be read at two (2) regular business meetings and voted on after the second reading. A quorum of members must be present at both of these meetings. The amendments may be passed by a simple majority of those present.

ARTICLE VI **MEMBERS**

The members of this Fire Department shall consist of active firefighters, officers, junior firefighters and reserves. Member shall adhere to member qualifications in order to remain in good standing. Members in good standing shall approve all business through a majority vote at the regular, monthly business meetings. All members and candidates for membership will receive a copy of the current By-Laws and shall sign a form stating that they have read and understand them. From this point forward for purposes of these by-laws, a "member" is considered a "member in good standing" unless otherwise noted.

Junior Firefighters - Junior members of this department must follow all by-laws, rules, regulations, training, and SOPs as other members of the department, as well as the by-laws, rules, regulations, training and SOPs specific to the NZVFD Junior Firefighters program. Junior members must be at least 16 years of age. A release must be received by a legal guardian. In addition, Junior Firefighter shall be required to submit grades each grading period. If a Junior Firefighter is not passing each course at the end of the grading period, he/she will be placed on probation for six (6) weeks. A Junior Firefighter Coordinator shall be appointed by the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief in December of each year.

ARTICLE VII **DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

Officer Elections — An election of officers shall take place on the first business meeting of December. All active members in good standing shall be eligible to vote. All Officers shall be approved by the members of the station through majority vote. Nominations for qualified officers in each position shall be received from the membership. A member shall be deemed elected to the office after a tally of votes indicates a majority of a least one vote by secret ballot.

Elected Fire Chief - The elected Fire Chief shall have complete charge of all equipment and personnel at all times. The Fire Chief shall have full and complete charge of the personnel at fire scenes and other emergencies and at training meetings. He/She shall direct the members at their labors through his/her subordinate officers. The Fire Chief will also prepare the yearly budget with assistance of all other officers.

Elected Assistant Fire Chief — In the absence of the Chief, the elected Assistant Fire Chief shall have complete charge of all equipment and personnel at all times. The Assistant Fire Chief shall have full and complete charge of the personnel at fire scenes and other emergencies and at training meetings. He/She shall direct the members at their labors through his/her subordinate officers. The Assistant Fire Chief will also prepare the yearly budget with assistance of all other officers.

Appointed Captains - Each Captain shall have charge of the firefighters in the Division, under the supervision of the Chief and/or Assistant Chief, and shall assist with training duties.

Appointed Lieutenants - Each Lieutenant shall have charge of the firefighters in the Division under the supervision of higher-ranking officers and shall assist with training duties.

Elected Secretary - The Secretary shall have custody of all department records. The Secretary shall be responsible for providing a detailed report of expenditures at the business meetings. The Secretary shall keep record of proceedings of each regular and called meeting.

Elected Treasurer - The Treasurer shall have custody of all department monies and maintain records of all financial dealings. All monies shall be deposited in a timely manner and care taken to maintain good financial standing for the good of the department.

Appointed Training Coordinator - The Training Coordinator shall coordinate a training schedule and shall appoint instructors for each training meeting. The Training Coordinator will present a training schedule to the Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief that includes documentation of objectives and completion of skill sets as related to the current SFFMA curriculum.

ARTICLE VIII

TERMS

Chief and Assistant Chief — The term of office shall be two (2) years with at least one year of service with the department in full membership capacity within the previous twenty-four months.

Secretary and Treasurer - The term of office shall be two (2) years for any member in good standing.

Captain, Lieutenant and Training Coordinator - The term of office shall be two (2) years for any member in good standing.

ARTICLE IX

COMMITTEES

Appointive Committees — The Chief/Assistant Chief, upon assuming office, shall oversee all committees.

Fire Prevention - Chairman will be appointed third Monday of July. (week containing October 8th)

ARTICLE X

DISCIPLINARY BOARD

Personnel - The Disciplinary Board shall consist of two of the following officers: Assistant Chief, Lieutenant, Secretary, Treasurer, or Captain; and two member (active and in good standing) of the department selected by rotation. In the event of a tie, the Chief will make the final decision.

They will be responsible for Departmental Disciplinary Actions and adhering to By-Laws under the supervision of the Fire Chief.

Duties — The duties of the Disciplinary Board shall be to handle any and all disciplinary matter pertaining to the department. This board may also take action on membership issues, failure to meet minimum training requirements, drug/alcohol concerns and consideration of waiver for members who no longer reside within the NZVFD service area. The actions of the Disciplinary Board shall be reported to the department at the next regular business meeting and included/attached to the minutes of the next business meeting.

ARTICLE XI

VACANCIES OF OFFICER POSITIONS

Elected Officers - If an elective office shall become vacant, the department at the next regular business meeting where majority members are present, will fill the vacancy by ballot vote, majority rules. If the vacancy is that of the Chief, the Assistant Chief will automatically become Chief for the remainder of the term.

Appointed Officers - If an appointed office shall become vacant, the Chief and Assistant Chief (in conference) shall fill the vacancy with the best-qualified personnel at the next regular business meeting.

ARTICLE XII

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at Meeting — All members shall attend all regular (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) meetings and called meeting. Failure to attend three (3) consecutive regular business or mandatory training meeting will automatically cause the member to be reported to the Disciplinary Board for review and action. Any member may be excused by the Chief or the Assistant Chief for just and reasonable cause for the absence. The Disciplinary Board must report the action taken at the next regular business meeting.

Leave of Absence — Any member shall ask the Disciplinary Board in writing, for a 30, 60 or 90-day leave of absence, and report back to the Disciplinary Board before returning to duty. While on leave of absence, the member will return all equipment to an Elected Officer. If any member has not reported for duty after his leave of absence, he/she will be dropped from the roster. The Disciplinary Board must report the action taken at the next regular business meeting.

ARTICLE XIII

REPETITIONING AND REINSTATEMENT

Repetitioning - If an applicant is voted on and rejected for membership in the department, he/she may again present an application for membership after a period of ninety (90) days, again meeting all applicant requirements.

Reinstatement of Resigned Members — Any member resigning of his/her own free will and accord may be reinstated by presenting an application for membership at any business meeting. Reinstatement applicants must meet all applicant requirements, be voted on by members and will be put on 90 days probation.

Reinstatement of Dropped Members - Any members dropped from the roll because of absence from meetings or because of expiration of his/her leave of absence may apply for membership

after a period of ninety (90) days. Any member who was dropped under BAD term may reapply after six (6) months.

Transitioning from Junior Firefighters to Members - Junior Firefighters in good standing may apply to become full Members when they meet the age requirements set forth in Article II. They must submit a new application and meet all applicant requirements. These members shall be given priority over other applicants who have not previously served in good standing with the department. In the event more than one Resigned Member or Junior Firefighter apply on the same date to become full members of the department, priority shall be given to the Junior.

ARTICLE XIV **ELECTIONS**

Election - Election to membership shall be conducted by secret ballot. If applicant does not receive a majority affirmative vote of members present at the meeting, in accordance with Article II, he/she will be rejected for at least ninety (90) days.

Inspecting of Ballot - Any active member of the department may inspect the ballot by making his/her desire known to the chair before the ballot is destroyed.

ARTICLE XV **TRAINING SCHOOLS**

Any member of the department wishing to attend Fire Department Training Schools must be recommended by the Training Coordinator and approved by the Fire Chief.

Registration Expenses — Registration expenses for training schools will be paid for by the department for any member wishing to attend, with the recommendation of the Training Coordinator and approval of the Fire Chief.

Receipts — Upon completion of training school, personnel must turn in receipts for expenses and for school registration along with their completion certificate. In the event certificates are not awarded, attendees must bring back an agenda, conference brochure, or other proof of attendance/completion to retain funding.

ARTICLE XVI **SERVICE**

Service Determination — The service records of the members shall be determined by the official minutes. Any member with service, certified from other Fire Departments will be kept in personnel files and shall be recorded by the department secretary.

Service Awards - There may be service awards for five (5), ten (10), fifteen (15), twenty (20), twenty-five (25), and thirty (30) years or more of service. There may be perfect attendance awards for drills.

ARTICLE XVII

TRIALS

insubordination - Any member accused of insubordination (see Article XVIII for explanation) shall be called before the Disciplinary Board upon the request of a superior officer or a member and shall be given a fair and impartial trial. If he/she is found guilty, he/she at the discretion of the board shall be dropped from the department roster without a suspension period enacted, at the discretion of the Disciplinary Board.

Appeals — Any member brought before the Disciplinary Board for trial shall have the right of privilege to appeal his/her case before an open meeting of the department where he/she shall be given a chance to state his/her case and be voted on by majority vote, per Article II. The Chief/Assistant Chief shall act, or designate some other member to act, as a judge of the court.

Disobedience — Any member refusing to obey the lawful command of his superior officer or person in charge at the time of emergency shall be guilty of insubordination. Any member failing to live up to the By-Laws of this Department shall be guilty of insubordination.

Violations - Any member who is charged with an offense greater than Class C, or with Moving Violations, shall notify the Disciplinary Board for review. It shall be the member's responsibility to inform the Chief of any criminal legal action being brought against a member within 72 hours of the offense or lawsuit. Failure to notify the Disciplinary Board could result in immediate dismissal.

Suspension or Probation — The Chief or Assistant Chief has the authority to relieve any member from their duties of the department for a period not to exceed thirty (30) days. The member must report to the Disciplinary Board after the probationary period for evaluation and eligibility determination.

ARTICLE XVIII

OBEDIENCE TO ORDER

Members shall be governed by the following general rules of conduct. Violations by any member of the department of any of these rules of conduct may be considered sufficient cause for dismissal, demotion, suspension, or other disciplinary action, brought about through the Disciplinary Board.

General Orders - Obedience to the orders of a superior in rank must be faithfully observed, and any member offending in this regard shall be held strictly accountable. If an officer is not on the scene, the firefighter with most seniority will be in charge until an officer arrives and assumes command.

Knowledge of Rules — The members of the department shall read and become familiar with all Rules and Regulations, SOPs, and Plans relating to the Department. No plea of ignorance of these will be accepted as an excuse.

Obey Lawful Orders — Members shall obey lawful orders and directions given by superior officers. Such obedience shall be prompt and willing.

Insubordination — The failure or deliberate refusal of any member to obey any lawful order given by any superior officer shall be deemed insubordination. Flaunting the authority of any superior officer by obvious disrespect or by disrupting their order shall likewise be deemed insubordination.

Unlawful Order Prohibited — No Commander, Supervisor, or acting officer shall knowingly or willfully issue an order which is in violation of any law, ordinance, or department rule.

Obedience to Unlawful Orders - No member is required to obey any order which is contrary to the laws of the United States or the State of Texas. Such refusal to obey, however, is the member's responsibility and the member shall be required to justify the action.

Reporting Unlawful Orders - Any member who is given any unlawful, unjust or improper order shall at first opportunity report in writing the full facts of the incident together with their own action to any officer.

Performance of Duty — Members shall perform all lawful duties as may be required by them by competent authority regardless whether such duties are specifically assigned to them in any rules or duty manuals.

Respect of Rank - All department officers shall demand proper respect due to their rank and shall not allow any member or visitor to speak disrespectfully of the department or its members. No members shall publicly criticize the official actions or orders of a superior officer via social media.

Enforcement of Rules - Every officer, on or off duty, will uphold the rules of the department.

Notifying Members of Rule Violations — If a member violates a Fire Department Rule and it comes to the attention of an officer, the officer shall immediately notify the guilty member of their violation and shall report the information surrounding the event to a member of the Disciplinary Board. The Board shall discuss and may take action on the event at the next Disciplinary Board meeting.

Civility — All members are strongly encouraged to show regard for others by being polite and respectfully, including no screaming or vulgar words, to the general public and all members.

ARTICLE XIX

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

NIMS Compliance — NZVFD has adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the standard for incident management.

NIMS Training - Members must complete the proper training, relative to their position of service within the department. The Training Coordinator shall be responsible for assuring that members meet the current NIMS training requirements, as provided by the Madison County Emergency Management Coordinator.

ARTICLE XX

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR NZVFD MEMBERS

1. It shall be the duty of all members of the department to obey all legal commands of the officers while on duty.
2. It shall be the duty of all members to be prompt to all meeting, drills, and alarms.
3. Upon alarm of a fire or emergency, members shall report to the Fire Station promptly. Equipment necessary for the alarm shall respond accordingly.

4. No member shall appear at any meeting of the Fire Department or on duty in a state of intoxication or under the influence of drugs. No member shall smoke tobacco in the hot zone of a scene.
5. No member shall consume alcoholic beverages while in uniform or other department-issued attire in view of the public or in a public place.
6. No member shall leave the scene of a fire, fire drill, meeting or other incident without the permission of the chief or Assistant Chief, or commanding officer.
7. No persons, with the exception of the members of the North Zulch Volunteer Fire Department shall ride on any piece of apparatus without the permission of the Chief, Assistant Chief or officer in charge.
8. No member will be allowed to drive or operate any equipment in response to a fire or emergency unless they have been thoroughly instructed in the proper and safe use of such equipment.
9. A member shall at all times take precautions to protect private property
10. A member shall display a **courteous** attitude towards citizens, but no orders shall be taken from them.
11. Members shall maintain department property, including bunker gear, pagers, station, radio, charger, and apparatus in a clean, ready for immediate use condition. Should any member damage department property through negligence, he/she shall be held responsible for replacing property at the discretion of the Disciplinary Board.
12. No horseplay or other disregard for safety shall be permitted while on duty or while in attendance of any meeting or drill or on scene.
13. Members responding in personal vehicles as an emergency vehicle must have required emergency vehicle lights and meet state requirement for an emergency vehicle. State emergency vehicle laws must be followed. Members responding in personal vehicles must obey all regular traffic laws. No member shall respond with emergency lighting on their personal vehicle until a emergency driving course has been successfully completed. The Chief and Assistant Chief may remove emergency vehicle lighting privileges for emergency responders, at their discretion.
14. No one may remove any equipment, vehicles, or materials from the fire department premises without approval of the Chief, Assistant Chief. If a vehicle is removed from the station, the Sheriffs Office shall know the location.
15. Emergency vehicles shall stop for all stop signs and signals lights and shall proceed cautiously, in a safe manner through the intersection with due regard to life and property. Fire department vehicles should maintain a safe speed for road conditions.
16. All vehicles must maintain at least a 500-foot distance when following emergency vehicles to a fire.
17. All members shall yield to emergency vehicles.

18. All members and/or their family members shall not discuss a fire or other related incident with spectators, nor post information on social media or other means. If a member suspects arson, immediately advise the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, or officer in charge, in confidence.
19. All members are to return to the station after a drill or fire and assist in returning apparatus to an operational status, complete all necessary reports and remain until dismissed by the officer in charge.
20. NZVFD will issue a helmet, bunker coat, boots, wildland fire gear, radio and charger or pager to each member when available. It is the member's responsibility to pay for replacement of the equipment if damaged, lost or stolen due to neglect. If stolen, the member must notify the Chief and/or Assistant Chief so a report with local law enforcement can be filed. A copy of the report will be provided to the Disciplinary Board.
21. When a firefighter is absent from fires or drills at an approved training school, the member shall not be penalized on the attendance roster for the fires and drills missed.
22. When passing an emergency vehicle, you must first notify that vehicle and be given approval to pass.
23. Only members with proper driver's license accreditation may drive apparatus back from the scene, or unless directed by the Commanding Officer.
24. Foul language will not be tolerated on a fire scene.
25. Firefighters are subject to have their CCH's run through public data at any time, since our rules say that we will.
26. Seatbelt use is required in all department vehicles, according to state law.
27. Firefighters are not authorized to run "First Responder" calls, if they are not also trained members of the group, except for the Chief and Assistant Chief.
28. The Fire Chief, highest commanding officer or designee will act as PIO on scenes and all photos, information, or comments regarding that scene should only be sent out through that person serving as PIO at that time.

SIGNED AND ACKNOWLEDGED:

SIGN:

PRNT:

DATE:

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