

HUERFANO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

NOW HIRING

CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Walsenburg, Colorado

Applications Open: October 26, 2026 | Deadline: December 25, 2026

The Huerfano County Fire Protection District is accepting applications for the position of Chief of Operations.

HCFPD is a rural volunteer fire protection district seeking an experienced fire-service professional who is ready to do more than manage emergency calls.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BUILD A FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The successful candidate will be a leader, teacher, mentor, team builder, and experienced firefighter who understands the unique challenges - and rewards - of leading volunteers in a rural community.

THE POSITION

The Chief of Operations is responsible for the operational leadership of HCFPD, including:

- Emergency operations and Incident Command.
- Firefighter safety.
- Structural and wildland readiness.
- Training and firefighter development.
- Recruitment and retention.
- Officer development.
- Apparatus and equipment readiness.
- Mutual-aid relationships.
- Operational planning.
- Strategy and tactics.
- Development of an effective operational chain of command.
- Regional and state agency relationships.

The position reports directly to the HCFPD Board of Directors.

WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

HCFPD is seeking someone with significant fire-service experience who genuinely enjoys teaching firefighters, building teams, developing future officers, and helping a volunteer department grow.

- Strong operational firefighting experience.
- Incident-command experience.
- Proven leadership ability.
- Excellent judgment.
- Ability to teach and mentor.

- Strong communication skills.
- Ability to build relationships.
- Professionalism.
- Integrity.
- Accountability.
- A positive attitude.
- A firefighter-first leadership mentality.

The Chief must be willing to create a transparent and effective chain of command and foster an environment where firefighters can train, grow, contribute, and succeed.

EXPERIENCE

Applicants should possess a minimum of five years of active fire-service experience, including significant operational firefighting experience and demonstrated leadership responsibility.

Officer, company officer, crew leader, or Incident Command experience is strongly preferred.

Experience leading within a volunteer, combination, rural, or small-community fire department is highly desirable.

EDUCATION

A bachelor's degree in Fire Science, Fire Administration, Emergency Services, Emergency Management, Public Administration, Organizational Leadership, or a related discipline is preferred but not required.

HCFPD recognizes that substantial fire-service experience, training, certifications, leadership ability, teaching ability, and demonstrated competency may be equally or more valuable than formal academic education.

EXPERIENCE AND ATTITUDE MATTER.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Applicants should possess or be prepared to complete applicable training including:

- ICS-100.
- ICS-200.
- IS-700.
- S-130.
- S-190.
- L-180.
- CPR/AED.
- Appropriate driver/operator qualifications.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Within 12 Months

- ICS-300.
- Fire Officer I or equivalent.

- Incident Safety Officer training or equivalent.
- HCFPD Chief Officer competency evaluation.

Within 24 Months

- Fire Officer II or equivalent.
- Fire Instructor I or equivalent instructional competency.
- Advanced wildland leadership development appropriate to District needs.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- ICS-300.
- ICS-400.
- Fire Officer I.
- Fire Officer II.
- Fire Instructor I.
- Incident Safety Officer.
- HazMat Operations.
- NWCG FFT1 or progression toward FFT1.
- Wildland leadership experience.
- Driver/Operator training.
- Pump operations training.
- Rural water-supply experience.
- Structural command experience.
- Wildland Urban Interface experience.
- Vehicle extrication experience.
- Multi-agency or mutual-aid command experience.

Candidates lacking certain developmental certifications may still be considered when they possess significant equivalent experience and demonstrate the ability to complete required professional development.

INCIDENT COMMAND

Candidates should possess a strong understanding of the Incident Command System and experience managing emergency operations.

Experience coordinating multi-company incidents, mutual aid, multi-agency responses, rural structural fires, and wildland incidents is highly desirable.

BUILDING THE HCFPD TEAM

A major responsibility of the next Chief of Operations will be helping HCFPD strengthen its volunteer force.

- Recruit.
- Retain.
- Teach.
- Mentor.

- Develop officers.
- Improve training.
- Build morale.
- Establish expectations.
- Strengthen operational capabilities.

We are seeking someone who believes leadership is not about the rank on the collar - it is about making the people around you better.

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Chief will represent HCFPD professionally within the community and with regional and state partners.

The successful candidate should be comfortable building relationships with neighboring fire departments, local government, emergency management, law enforcement, dispatch, the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control, wildland partners, state agencies, and community organizations.

The Chief should actively seek opportunities to collaborate, improve training, strengthen mutual aid, promote HCFPD, and professionally advocate for the District's needs.

COLLABORATION

The Chief of Operations must be prepared to establish a collaborative and professional working relationship with the HCFPD Board of Directors and Chief of Administration.

HCFPD values respectful communication, transparency, accountability, information sharing, collaboration, professional disagreement, and respect for clearly defined areas of responsibility.

Our goal is a leadership team capable of making thoughtful decisions together while maintaining clear organizational roles.

RESIDENCY / RESPONSE REQUIREMENT

Due to the emergency-response responsibilities of the position, the successful applicant must maintain a primary residence allowing response to an HCFPD fire station within 15 minutes or less under normal driving conditions.

Continued compliance with this requirement is a condition of appointment unless otherwise approved by the Board.

COMPENSATION

Salary: Based upon experience and qualifications

HCFPD is a volunteer fire department.

The Chief of Operations position does not currently provide health benefits or a pension/retirement benefit.

SELECTION PROCESS

Finalists may be asked to participate in:

- Board interview.
- Scenario-based interview.
- Incident-command exercise.
- Certification and training review.
- Reference checks.
- Background screening.
- Driving-record review.

Final appointment is subject to approval by the HCFPD Board of Directors.

APPLICATION PERIOD

Applications will be accepted beginning October 26, 2026 and will remain open for 60 days, closing December 25, 2026.

HOW TO APPLY

The full job description and application are available at:

www.huerfanofire.org

WHAT WE HOPE TO FIND

We're looking for a Chief who sees potential.

Someone who looks at a small rural volunteer department and thinks: "Let's build this."

Someone willing to teach.

Someone willing to listen.

Someone who believes firefighters deserve strong leadership, meaningful training, clear expectations, and opportunities to grow.

Someone who can lead an emergency scene confidently while still possessing the humility to continue learning.

Someone who understands that a strong fire department isn't built by one Chief.

It is built by developing a strong team.

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