

HUERFANO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Job Description, Requirements & Qualifications

and

Public Job Posting

Walsenburg, Colorado

Application Period: October 26, 2026 - December 25, 2026

Prepared for HCFPD Board and Recruitment Use

PART I

FORMAL JOB DESCRIPTION, REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATIONS

Position	Chief of Operations
Department	Huerfano County Fire Protection District
Location	Walsenburg, Colorado
Reports To	HCFPD Board of Directors
Department Type	Volunteer Fire Protection District
Compensation	Salary based upon qualifications and experience
Benefits	No employee benefits or pension/retirement benefit are currently provided
Residency/Response	Primary residence must allow response to an HCFPD fire station within 15 minutes or less under normal driving conditions

POSITION SUMMARY

The Huerfano County Fire Protection District seeks a knowledgeable, experienced, motivated, and service-oriented Chief of Operations to lead the operational division of a rural volunteer fire department serving Huerfano County and the Walsenburg area.

The Chief of Operations is responsible for emergency operations, incident command, firefighter operational readiness, training and development, apparatus and equipment readiness, officer development, recruitment and retention support, operational policies, mutual-aid relationships, and the overall development of a safe, capable, professional volunteer firefighting organization.

HCFPD is seeking more than an experienced firefighter.

The successful candidate must be a leader, teacher, mentor, team builder, and public-safety professional who recognizes that the strength of a volunteer fire department depends upon its people.

Formal education is valued; however, HCFPD recognizes that significant fire-service experience, training, certifications, leadership ability, judgment, teaching ability, and attitude may be equally or more important.

The Chief of Operations must possess a genuine desire to **build firefighters rather than simply command them**.

ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

The Chief of Operations shall place the safety, training, professional development, and success of HCFPD firefighters at the center of operational decision making.

- A positive and professional attitude.
- Servant leadership.
- Integrity.

- Accountability.
- Transparency.
- Humility.
- Sound judgment.
- Ability to accept constructive criticism.
- Desire to teach and mentor.
- Commitment to firefighter development.
- Ability to build trust.
- Respect for the chain of command.
- Respect for Board governance.
- Commitment to the long-term success of HCFPD.

The Chief should take satisfaction in developing other firefighters and officers and recognize that successful leadership is measured, in part, by the strength of the team developed under that leadership.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Emergency Operations & Incident Command

- Provide leadership during emergency incidents.
- Establish or ensure competent Incident Command.
- Conduct incident size-up.
- Establish strategy and tactical objectives.
- Determine appropriate operational modes.
- Maintain firefighter accountability.
- Establish and maintain effective fireground communications.
- Request appropriate additional and mutual-aid resources.
- Maintain reasonable span of control.
- Ensure safe assignment of personnel.
- Coordinate multi-agency emergency operations.
- Evaluate changing incident conditions.
- Transition strategies when conditions warrant.
- Ensure proper command transfer and incident termination.
- Conduct or assign after-action reviews following significant incidents.

The Chief must demonstrate sound fireground judgment and an understanding that firefighter safety is paramount.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Develop operational goals.
- Identify current and future staffing needs.
- Develop recruitment strategies.
- Develop firefighter-retention strategies.
- Establish officer-development pathways.

- Develop firefighter competency standards.
- Improve operational capabilities.
- Develop succession plans.
- Identify equipment and apparatus needs.
- Assist with long-range planning.
- Support development of a sustainable volunteer-fire-service model.

The Chief should continuously evaluate how HCFPD can responsibly improve its operational capabilities.

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & FIREFIGHTER DEVELOPMENT

The Chief of Operations shall actively participate in creating an environment in which volunteer firefighters want to serve, learn, and remain.

- Support firefighter recruitment.
- Welcome and develop new members.
- Mentor probationary firefighters.
- Develop existing firefighters.
- Identify potential future officers.
- Provide meaningful training opportunities.
- Encourage appropriate professional development.
- Address operational and training deficiencies.
- Recognize firefighter accomplishments.
- Build a healthy team culture.
- Support reasonable volunteer expectations.

The Chief should understand the unique challenges of recruiting and retaining personnel in a rural volunteer fire department.

TRAINING

The Chief of Operations shall ensure that HCFPD maintains a meaningful and effective operational training program.

- Establish annual operational training priorities.
- Evaluate firefighter competencies.
- Assist with development of training calendars.
- Participate in and teach training when appropriate.
- Mentor instructors and officers.
- Ensure training reflects District hazards.
- Ensure firefighters train on District apparatus and equipment.
- Encourage outside training opportunities.
- Identify certification and qualification pathways.
- Maintain or ensure documentation of training.

Training should include, as appropriate:

- Structural firefighting.
- Wildland firefighting.
- Incident command.
- Rural water supply.
- Pump operations.
- Driver/operator skills.
- SCBA.
- MAYDAY.
- Accountability.
- Search.
- Fire behavior.
- Ground ladders.
- Hose operations.
- Vehicle extrication.
- Traffic incidents.
- Radio communications.
- Officer development.
- Mutual-aid operations.

The Chief must possess the ability and willingness to **teach, not simply direct**.

OPERATIONAL READINESS

The Chief of Operations shall ensure operational readiness of:

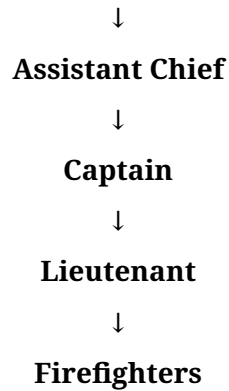
- Engines.
- Tenders.
- Brush apparatus.
- Fire suppression equipment.
- Rescue/extrication equipment.
- SCBA.
- PPE.
- Radios.
- Hose.
- Pumps.
- Hand tools.
- Operational supplies.

The Chief shall establish systems for routine inspections and promptly identify significant deficiencies.

OFFICER DEVELOPMENT & CHAIN OF COMMAND

The Chief shall establish and maintain a professional, transparent, and effective operational chain of command.

Chief of Operations



- Develop subordinate officers.
- Delegate appropriately.
- Allow officers to perform responsibilities associated with their rank.
- Mentor future leaders.
- Establish clear expectations.
- Hold officers accountable.
- Maintain consistent communication.

Micromanagement should be avoided when competent delegation is appropriate.

COMMUNITY & INTERAGENCY RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief of Operations serves as a visible representative of HCFPD.

The Chief shall develop and maintain positive professional relationships with:

- Surrounding fire protection districts.
- Huerfano County agencies.
- City agencies.
- Law enforcement.
- Emergency management.
- Dispatch.
- Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control.
- Wildland agencies.
- State agencies.
- Mutual-aid partners.
- Community organizations.
- Residents and businesses.

The Chief should actively identify opportunities to:

- Collaborate.
- Train jointly.
- Share resources.
- Improve mutual aid.
- Promote HCFPD.
- Communicate District needs.

- Strengthen regional emergency services.

Professional appearance, conduct, and communication are expected when representing the District.

BOARD RELATIONSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

The Chief of Operations reports to and remains accountable to the HCFPD Board of Directors.

- Provide accurate operational information to the Board.
- Attend meetings when requested.
- Provide regular operational reports.
- Communicate significant concerns promptly.
- Carry out lawful Board directives.
- Provide professional recommendations.
- Respect the Board's governance responsibilities.
- Participate constructively in strategic planning.

The Chief of Operations must demonstrate a genuine desire to establish a collaborative and productive working relationship with the Chief of Administration and the HCFPD Board of Directors.

Collaboration shall include:

- Open communication.
- Respect for assigned areas of responsibility.
- Information sharing.
- Joint organizational planning.
- Budget planning.
- Grant planning.
- Personnel development.
- Recruitment.
- Policy development.
- Long-range planning.

Professional disagreement is acceptable and expected in a healthy organization; disrespect, retaliation, intimidation, withholding material information, or deliberate organizational obstruction are not.

MINIMUM EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

- A minimum of five years of active fire-service experience.
- Significant hands-on firefighting experience.
- Experience with structural firefighting.
- Experience with rural fire operations.
- Experience with incident command.
- Experience supervising firefighters or emergency personnel.
- Demonstrated leadership responsibility.

Preferred

At least two years of experience as a fire officer, acting officer, company officer, incident commander, crew leader, or comparable supervisory position.

Experience within volunteer, combination, rural, or small-community fire departments is highly desirable.

Years of membership alone shall not constitute sufficient leadership experience.

EDUCATION

Preferred

A bachelor's degree in one of the following or a related field:

- Fire Science.
- Fire Administration.
- Emergency Services.
- Emergency Management.
- Public Administration.
- Organizational Leadership.

Equivalent Experience

A college degree is not mandatory when the applicant possesses a strong combination of:

- Fire-service experience.
- Officer experience.
- Certifications.
- Specialized training.
- Teaching experience.
- Demonstrated incident-command competency.
- Organizational leadership.
- Volunteer-fire-service leadership.

HCFPD recognizes that practical experience, professional development, leadership ability, and attitude may be equally or more valuable than formal academic education.

REQUIRED TRAINING / CERTIFICATIONS

At the time of appointment or within a Board-approved transition period:

- ICS-100.
- ICS-200.
- IS-700.
- S-130.
- S-190.
- L-180.
- Current CPR/AED.
- Appropriate emergency vehicle/driver qualification.

- Demonstrated structural-firefighter competency.

REQUIRED WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF APPOINTMENT

Unless already completed:

- ICS-300.
- Fire Officer I or equivalent approved officer-development curriculum.
- Incident Safety Officer training or equivalent.
- HCFPD Chief Officer competency evaluation.

REQUIRED WITHIN 24 MONTHS

Unless already completed:

- Fire Officer II or approved equivalent.
- Fire Instructor I or equivalent instructional competency.
- Advanced wildland leadership development appropriate to District operations.
- Additional Chief Officer development identified by the Board.

PREFERRED TRAINING & QUALIFICATIONS

- Fire Officer I.
- Fire Officer II.
- Fire Instructor I.
- ICS-300.
- ICS-400.
- HazMat Operations.
- NWCG FFT1 or progression toward FFT1.
- Wildland leadership qualifications.
- Driver/Operator training.
- Pump operations training.
- Vehicle extrication training.
- Incident Safety Officer training.
- Rural water-supply experience.
- Wildland Urban Interface experience.
- Officer-development education.
- Experience managing mutual-aid incidents.

No single preferred certification shall automatically disqualify an otherwise exceptional candidate.

REQUIRED CORE COMPETENCIES

Fireground Operations

- Structural firefighting.
- Fire behavior.
- Strategy and tactics.

- Rural water supply.
- Apparatus deployment.
- Personnel accountability.
- Fireground communications.
- SCBA operations.
- Firefighter safety.

Incident Command

- Initial command.
- Multi-company operations.
- Mutual-aid integration.
- Resource management.
- Divisions/groups.
- Span of control.
- Accountability.
- Transfer of command.
- Multi-agency coordination.

Leadership

- Team building.
- Conflict resolution.
- Coaching.
- Mentoring.
- Performance management.
- Delegation.
- Officer development.
- Volunteer management.

Organizational Development

- Recruiting.
- Retention.
- Training development.
- Succession planning.
- Strategic planning.
- Operational improvement.

Communications

- Professional written communication.
- Public speaking.
- Fireground radio communication.
- Interagency communication.
- Board presentations.
- Community interaction.

RESIDENCY / RESPONSE REQUIREMENT

Because of the operational responsibilities of this position and HCFPD's rural response environment, the Chief of Operations must maintain a primary residence that allows response to an HCFPD fire station within 15 minutes or less under normal driving conditions.

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

DRIVER REQUIREMENT

- Maintain a valid driver's license.
- Maintain an acceptable driving record.
- Meet District requirements for operation of assigned emergency vehicles.
- Successfully complete required emergency vehicle training.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- Integrity.
- Professionalism.
- Accountability.
- Confidentiality.
- Respect.
- Appropriate emotional control.
- Fair treatment of personnel.
- Ethical decision making.

The position requires someone capable of accepting responsibility for mistakes and taking corrective action.

PHYSICAL & OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The Chief must be capable of performing the essential operational duties assigned to the position, including responding to emergency incidents and functioning in the emergency environment consistent with applicable District requirements.

Reasonable accommodations shall be considered as required by applicable law.

COMPENSATION

Salary will be established by the HCFPD Board of Directors and shall be commensurate with qualifications, experience, certifications, leadership background, and demonstrated competency.

HCFPD is a volunteer fire department.

This position does not currently include employee health benefits or a pension/retirement benefit.

APPOINTMENT

The Chief of Operations shall be appointed by the Huerfano County Fire Protection District Board of Directors.

Selection may include:

- Application review.
- Resume review.
- Certification review.
- Board interview.
- Scenario-based interview.
- Command assessment.
- Reference checks.
- Background investigation.
- Driving-record review.

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

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Huerfano County Fire Protection District shall consider qualified applicants consistent with applicable federal and Colorado employment laws.

APPLICATION PERIOD

Applications Open: October 26, 2026

Applications Close: December 25, 2026

Applications will remain open for 60 days.

The District reserves the right to extend or modify the recruitment period if necessary.

PART II

PUBLIC JOB POSTING

CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

Huerfano County Fire Protection District - 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.

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.

Huerfano County Fire Protection District

Walsenburg, Colorado