

TITLE: JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

SPECIAL NOTES/CROSS REFERENCE:

WFD POLICY 23.09 JOB DESCRIPTION – JUNIOR
FIREFIGHTER

WFD POLICY 23.11 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE OFFICER
TRAINING STANDARDS

WFD POLICY 23.10 RECRUITMENT, ORIENTATION AND
PROBATION

ADOPTED:

Res 2025-0224
Sept 22/25

REVISED:

NEXT REVIEW DATE:

2030

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Town of Westlock wishes to promote Junior Firefighter programs as an integral part of the Fire & Rescue Services mandate.

SCOPE:

This policy outlines the duties, responsibilities, and actions of Junior Firefighters in a structured program that addresses training standards, educational opportunities, safety requirements, and mentorship. It includes participation limitations and supervision requirements.

PURPOSE:

The goal of the Junior Firefighter Program is to generate interest in the fire service and provide youth with teamwork, leadership, and firefighting skills. The program is designed to encourage Junior Firefighters to pursue careers in emergency services and transition into active volunteer members upon reaching 18 years of age.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The **Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief** are responsible for implementing this policy and ensuring its objectives are met.

Supervisors must ensure the safety of all personnel, including Junior Firefighters, by overseeing compliance with all policy provisions.

Junior Firefighters are expected to follow all departmental policies, procedures, and guidelines applicable to their role.

DEFINITIONS: ***Contaminated Atmosphere*** refers to an environment that poses a health risk due to the presence of hazardous substances.

Hot Zone is the area immediately surrounding the hazards of an incident site and is restricted to trained entry and rescue personnel only.

A ***Junior Firefighter*** is defined as a youth between 15 and 18 years of age participating in the program.

Probationary Period refers to the first six months of service within the program, during which performance and suitability are evaluated.

A ***Volunteer*** is any individual providing services for the Fire & Rescue Services without expectation of remuneration.

ELIGIBILITY

This program is open to residents of the Town of Westlock who are between the ages of 15 and 18. Applicants must be in good academic standing and maintain regular school attendance while participating in the program. The department has limited the number of Junior Firefighter positions to four at any given time. Applications will be evaluated based on the standard departmental recruitment process. Once accepted, participants will be considered volunteers of the Town of Westlock Fire & Rescue Services. Time spent in the program may be eligible for high school credits through Work Experience or Career and Technology Studies (CTS), in accordance with school division policies.

PARENTAL CONSENT

Parental consent and a signed waiver of claim against the Town is required acknowledging the limitations of the Town's insurance policy.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE & TRAINING

Junior Firefighters are fully integrated into the regular training program of the Fire & Rescue Services. They follow the same NFPA 1001 Level I & II curriculum as regular members. This includes participating in all scheduled training sessions alongside their assigned platoon. Training progress, competency development, and skill evaluations are tracked using the department's fire management software, which provides a centralized record of training participation and qualifications. While they share the same curriculum and standards, operational activities are limited to ensure developmental appropriateness and compliance with provincial guidelines for youth.

participation in emergency services.

EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION AND HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT

The program collaborates with the Pembina Hills School Division to ensure Junior Firefighters can receive academic recognition for their efforts. Eligible students may earn up to 15 high school credits through Work Experience 15/25/35 or appropriate CTS modules, such as those in the Health Care Services (HCS), Trades, Manufacturing and Transportation (TMT), or Fire and Emergency Services (FES) streams.

Coordination between the school liaison, fire department training officer, and the student ensures proper documentation and compliance with Alberta Education standards.

SUPERVISION & MENTORSHIP

Each Junior Firefighter is assigned to a regular platoon and placed under the direct supervision of a Company Officer. During training or on incident scenes, they may also be supervised by a designated senior firefighter. Junior Firefighters will be assigned a mentor who will provide individualized support, skill guidance, and performance feedback throughout their time in the program. The mentor is responsible for helping the Junior Firefighter meet their goals safely and effectively, while also reinforcing policy adherence and safe operational behavior.

YOUTH SAFETY IN ADVANCED TRAINING

While Junior Firefighters receive the same level of training as regular volunteers, their participation in high-risk activities is strictly limited. Junior Firefighters are not permitted to enter immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environments, perform interior fire suppression, or operate within Hot Zones. They are also prohibited from participating in hazardous materials responses beyond awareness-level support. Live-fire training may only be observed or conducted in a controlled, non-IDLH setting and must be approved by the Fire Chief.

All participants must submit a medical clearance form and a signed parental consent form acknowledging the risks and limitations of the Town's insurance coverage.

BENEFITS

Junior Firefighters are covered under Workers' Compensation and municipal liability insurance (within the limitations of Town policy). Participants will also receive a Town of Westlock facility recreation pass and may request letters of recommendation for post-secondary institutions or employment opportunities.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PARTICIPATION

Junior Firefighters who are at least 16 years of age and have successfully completed their probationary period may respond to emergency incidents within the Town of Westlock. Their role during such responses is strictly supportive and limited to non-hazardous duties. They may assist with firefighter rehabilitation, change SCBA bottles, and prepare equipment within the Cold Zone.

Junior Firefighters will respond using second or third due apparatus and must always yield their seat to regular members when necessary. They will be supervised at all times by a senior firefighter during emergency responses.

MEDICAL RESPONSE INVOLVEMENT

Junior Firefighters may assist with medical responses under the direction of the Incident Commander (IC) and within their level of training. Their involvement is determined by the severity of the medical incident and their individual competencies, mirroring a comparable standard to that of lifeguards of the same age group.

Similar to certified youth lifeguards, who are typically trained in Standard First Aid, CPR Level C, and the use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), Junior Firefighters are expected to maintain equivalent certifications. As with lifeguards, Junior Firefighters may provide basic life support, assist in patient monitoring, and support advanced responders through non-invasive tasks such as gathering supplies, completing incident documentation, or providing comfort and reassurance to patients and family members.

Junior Firefighters are not authorized to make medical decisions, administer medication, or perform invasive procedures. They may assist under supervision only when the IC has deemed the scene safe and the nature of the response appropriate for their role. At no time will Junior Firefighters be placed in situations involving exposure to bodily fluids without appropriate Personal Protective Equipment or enter environments deemed high-risk by the IC.

Their involvement is consistent with the department's commitment to youth safety, community service, and practical training opportunities.

GREEN LIGHT USAGE

Junior Firefighters are not permitted to use flashing green lights on their personal vehicles. *Alberta's Vehicle Equipment Regulation (Alta Reg 322/2002)* reserves the use of flashing green lamps for full-time or volunteer firefighters actively responding to emergencies, as authorized by municipal bylaw. Junior Firefighters, by definition, are not full firefighters and are not required to respond to calls. Additionally, many Junior Firefighters operate under

Alberta's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program, which places restrictions on young drivers. Allowing the use of green lights in these cases could create confusion for the public and introduce unnecessary safety risks. This policy aligns with provincial legislation and best practices to maintain clear, safe, and legally compliant emergency response protocols

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Junior Firefighters are strictly prohibited from entering contaminated atmospheres, performing interior structural fire suppression, engaging in technical rescues, or responding to hazardous materials incidents. Additionally, Junior Firefighters are not permitted to leave school during regular instructional hours to attend emergency calls.

PROGRAM COMPLETION AND TRANSITION

Upon reaching the age of 18, Junior Firefighters automatically transition into a firefighter role with the Town of Westlock Fire Department, without requiring a new application. At that time, scope limitations are lifted and they may take on full operational responsibilities as qualified.

Graduates will receive a formal certificate of program completion and, upon request, letters of recommendation and application support for post-secondary fire service programs or related institutions.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Junior Firefighter Program will be evaluated periodically by the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, and designated company officers. Feedback from Junior Firefighters, their mentors, and guardians will be considered in assessing program effectiveness and guiding ongoing improvements. Outcomes may be documented for internal review or submitted to Council as required.



Jon Kramer Mayor



Simone Wiley CAO