

A front-facing view of a Rockford Fire Department engine. The truck is white with red and blue stripes. The word 'ROCKFORD' is visible on the front of the hood. A large red semi-transparent box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'FIRE CHIEF' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The truck's headlights, grille, and emergency lights are visible.

# FIRE CHIEF

**ROCKFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT**

*Rockford, Illinois*





**The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners**

**for the**

**CITY OF ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS**

seeks applications for the position of:

**Fire Chief**

**We offer an opportunity for a committed and passionate fire service professional who is dedicated to impacting community safety through effective emergency response. The successful candidate will leverage his/her strengths to:**

- **Garner the confidence and respect of community members, firefighters and city leaders through building and maintaining successful relationships**
- **Further build rapport and collaboration with regional public safety agencies through understanding the distinct advantages of alignment while respecting the unique role of each**
- **Provide direction and oversight of a department that is recognized for its efficiency and effectiveness**

**SALARY:** \$182,852.80 - \$215,446.40 annually

**OPENING DATE:** July 25, 2025

**CLOSING DATE:** August 22, 2025

## **APPLICATION INFORMATION**

### **Minimum Requirements for Application**

- Minimum of five years in a leadership role (e.g., Captain, District Chief/Battalion, Division Chief or Chief) with demonstrated success within a fire service agency.
- Pattern of progressive achievement throughout his/her career.
- Bachelor's degree required, preferably with emphasis in Fire Science, Emergency Management, Leadership, Public Administration, or closely related field.
- Demonstrated competency in strategic planning and execution (ensuring mission, vision and values drive the organization), financial planning, and staff development founded in outstanding interpersonal skills.
- Experience in an urban fire service agency or comparable experience.
- Certified or ability to be certified as Fire Officer II as defined in NFPA (will need to be certified through the IL Fire Marshal's office following hire).
- Minimum requirements in accordance with Illinois Compiled Statute, effective January 1, 2019. ILCS5/10-2.1-4.
- Possession and maintenance of a valid driver's license.
- The individual selected must reside within the corporate city limits of Rockford, Illinois, no later than six months after the effective date of appointment to the position and while serving in the role of Fire Chief.

### **Desired Qualifications**

- Master's Degree preferred
- Experience in an accredited Fire Department
- Management/leadership training such as: National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program or Chief Fire Officer designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence, Commission on Professional Credentialing; FEMA National Incident Management System courses

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Applications must be submitted electronically to Industrial/Organizational Solutions (IOS), the consulting firm managing this executive recruitment process.

Your application should include the following components:

1. A cover letter that addresses your qualifications (specific instructions provided below).
2. A résumé.
3. Completion of an Internet-based personal history questionnaire at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RockfordFDChief>.



Your cover letter and résumé must be submitted electronically via email to IOS' email address at [RockfordFD@iosolutions.com](mailto:RockfordFD@iosolutions.com). Your personal history questionnaire must be completed (through the link provided above) by 11:59 PM on August 22, 2025. Call IOS at 708-410-0198 with any questions and ask to speak with Allison Johnston.

### **Cover Letter Instructions**

Please provide a summary written narrative describing how your past experiences (both fire service and non-fire service), training, education, and certifications, make you qualified and how they have prepared you for this role. Please also list and explain your top five personal attributes that you believe will aid the Rockford Fire Department and the community.

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF POSITION**

### **Position Profile**

The Fire Chief is the executive in charge of overseeing the Rockford Fire Department. The Fire Chief is responsible for the overall management and leadership of all fire functions including strategy development, hiring, promotions, transfers, terminations, and staff recognition (over 330 personnel). Work involves responsibility for the efficient and effective operation of the Fire Department to ensure that firefighting, emergency medical, hazardous material mitigation, extrication, water rescue, and other technical rescue services are provided to the residents of Rockford. Work also involves consulting with City officials in determining overall plans and policies to be followed in conducting fire operations. Work performance is measured by total results obtained. The Fire Chief works closely with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners and interacts with the City Council members, as necessary. The Fire Chief reports to the Mayor and City Administrator.

### **Department Mission and Values**

#### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

The mission of the Rockford Fire Department is to protect the lives and property of our community through fire, emergency medical, and life safety services.

#### **VALUES:**

*PROFESSIONALISM   RESPECT   INTEGRITY   DEDICATION   EMPATHY*

## Duties and Responsibilities

An employee in this class may be called upon to do any or all of the following: *(These examples do not include all of the tasks which the employee may be expected to perform.)*

- Plans, organizes, directs, and manages the programs and activities of the Fire Department, including an Administrative Division, Operations Division, Training Division, 911 Division and Fire Prevention Division.
- Supervises a staff of uniformed firefighters, civilian, and 911 Center personnel directly or through subordinate supervisors.
- Consults with city officials in the development of overall policies and procedures to govern the activities of the department.
- Directs the participants in the preparation of the annual department budget, and in the control and expenditure of appropriations.
- Advises and assists subordinates in high importance emergency situations.
- Directs discussions, meetings, and resolution of union issues, grievances, and negotiations.
- Attends and participates in public functions for the purpose of promoting community safety; represents the department in news/media activities.
- Oversees the function of departmental staffing; identifies and documents departmental staffing needs; develops requests and/or proposals for additional staff.
- Provides for the selection, training, professional development, and work evaluation of department staff; authorizes discipline as required; provides policy guidance and interpretation to staff; ensures that policies are consistently enforced.
- Establishes and communicates general and specific departmental rules, regulations, policies, and procedures; establishes and oversees a procedure for maintaining discipline.
- Oversees and administrates the department's budget; establishes controls and manages expenditures.
- Interacts with the community on behalf of the department and the City; prepares and delivers speeches, lectures, and presentations; represents the department and the City before various city and county boards, commissions, and committees; responds to public inquiries and resolves complaints.
- Effectively supervises and recommends the hiring, discharge, assignment, evaluation, discipline, and adjustment of grievances of subordinate department employees.
- Prepares, recommends, and implements strategic plans to meet the City's current and long-range needs.



## Desired Knowledge, Abilities and Skills

- **Leadership:** The chief must have a clear vision, be capable of motivating subordinates department-wide, and gain swift buy-in. The chief must find a way to support his/her staff while ensuring that they are properly serving the community of Rockford. Must be an integral and engaged leader with a strong background in modern fire, EMS, emergency management, ambulance service, and all hazards' practices.
- **Relationship Building:** The chief needs to effectively work with members of the community to build solid relationships to help address challenges facing the city. The chief must collaborate with various community members, groups, and agencies so that the fire department can better serve the community as a whole. Also, the chief will need to work to build a solid and effective working relationship with fire fighters in the department as well as the fire union.
- **Management:** The chief needs to be an excellent manager of department resources. For example, the chief must be able to effectively use information produced by fire analysts and ensure that actionable intelligence is disseminated and properly used. The chief also needs to be able to manage human resources effectively and deal with challenging and detrimental internal disciplinary issues effectively. The chief needs to effectively enforce rules and uphold policy.
- **Union Management:** The chief must have experience interacting with collective bargaining units effectively. The chief will need to be adept at working with the union to reach mutually acceptable outcomes while being firm on policy/disciplinary matters.
- **911 Center:** The local 911 Call Center is under the command of the Fire Chief. The chief must be able to successfully manage a 911 call center and service other agencies efficiently and effectively.
- **Public Relations/Customer Service:** The chief will be responsible for ensuring that the needs of all citizens of Rockford are a priority, regardless of race, religion, or sex. The chief must be adept at fostering and enhancing a positive relationship with all community members.
- **Team-Orientation:** The fire chief will be required to work closely with numerous individuals. It will be necessary that the chief establishes excellent working relationships with the mayor, city administrator, city department directors, Winnebago County Sheriff, and community. While the chief is hired by the Fire and Police Commission, he/she will report directly to the Mayor and City Administrator. It is desirable that the chief have a strong focus on achieving success by partnering with these parties to achieve mutual goals. Also, the chief must work to create a department where employees work together to achieve goals.
- **Communication:** The chief needs to be an excellent communicator. He/she needs to serve as the face of the fire department and be willing and able to communicate information to the community, city council, city management, media (e.g., critical incidents), and external organizations.

- **Decision Making & Problem Solving:** The chief will need to be able to reason through multi-faceted issues and solve problems in a manner that reflects the best interests of the city. Specifically, the chief must handle and make decisions regarding complex personnel issues including, but not limited to, enforcing policy violations.
- **Fiscal Management:** The chief will be responsible for a large budget and will have to be adept at carefully managing the budget to achieve a level of strong service/output.
- **Technology:** The chief needs to have knowledge of how to effectively utilize information technology, encouraging personnel to embrace technology and its benefits. Must understand the need to use data for problem solving and community risk reduction efforts.
- **Tools:** The chief must be able to supervise, participate, and support operations including fire prevention, public education, fire pre-planning, building equipment, and maintenance as well as reviewing and preparing records and reports.
- **Creativity:** The chief must always be looking to improve on delivery of services, such as Mobile Integrated Healthcare, and be able to work closely with health care providers to improve service and outcomes.
- **Diversity:** The chief is responsible to ensure that appropriate training occurs with firefighters relative to diversity and issues dealing with people of color to ensure compliance with policies.

### Competency Requirements

- Ethical Conduct
- Leadership
- Personal Effectiveness/Credibility
- Relationship Building
- Communication Proficiency
- Public Relations/Customer Service
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving/Analysis
- Project and Fiscal Management
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Stress Management/Composure
- Time Management

### **Physical Requirements**

- Perform all the duties of a firefighter and assigned tasks.
- Operate fire equipment as efficiently and economically as possible under a variety of conditions and in accordance with established procedures. Equipment includes but is not limited to, vehicles, hoses, tools, heavy equipment, and computer and radio equipment.

### **Environmental Requirements**

- Job may require exposure to adverse environmental conditions.

### **Sensory Requirements**

- Job requires oral communications ability.
- Job requires color perception and discrimination, without impairment.
- Job requires sound perception and discrimination.
- Job requires odor perception and discrimination.
- Job requires depth perception and discrimination.
- Job requires texture perception and discrimination.
- Job requires visual perception and discrimination for each eye correctable up to 20/20.

### **Other Requirements**

- Possession of a valid driver's license and a good driving record.
- The individual selected must reside within the corporate city limits of Rockford, Illinois, no later than six months after the effective date of appointment to the position and while serving in the role of Fire Chief.

## **COMMUNITY AND DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND**

### **Community Profile**

Rockford, with a population of 150,000 people, is the county seat of Winnebago County and is the major city of within the Rockford metropolitan statistical area, population 350,000. The City was founded in 1852 along the beautiful Rock River, and it has a rich cultural history, particularly in the manufacturing sector of the economy. Bordered between Interstate 39 and Interstate 90 and home to one of the largest air cargo operations in the United States, Rockford is known as a manufacturing, medical, tourism, and logistics hub due to its close proximity to Madison (75 miles), Milwaukee (95 miles), and Chicago (90 miles). Rockford is a culturally





diverse community, with a community racial composition of Caucasian (57%), African American (21%), Hispanic/Latino (17%), and Asian (2.5%).

Also known as the “Forest City,” Rockford is a picturesque city of over 65.7 square miles with rolling hills and tree-lined streets and offers 20,000 acres of open space and a park and recreation system that has perennially ranked as one of the best in the nation. Rockford has an architecturally diverse, affordable, and abundant housing stock, and because of the various community amenities, it is known as a great place to raise a family. Rockford’s public school system offers a rich and varied curriculum to its 28,000 students and is one of the largest school districts in Illinois. In addition, there are charter school and private school K-12 options as well. Rockford also enjoys a solid higher education presence with Rock Valley Community College, Rockford University, Northern Illinois University-Rockford, University of Illinois School of Medicine, and Rasmussen College. Rockford is a Promise Community, providing free tuition and general fees for Rockford Residents. This includes a bachelor’s degree from Northern Illinois University for students that live inside the City limits of the City of Rockford by the first day of freshman year in high school, attend Rockford public schools all four years of high school, and earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA).

The top economic clusters of the Rockford Region are distribution and electronic commerce, automotive, business services, metalworking technology, production technology and heavy machinery, aerospace vehicles and defense, food processing and manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and hospitality and tourism. Due to Rockford’s large historical manufacturing footprint, globalization, economic downturns, and the housing foreclosure crisis hit Rockford particularly hard over the past 15 years. Because of these factors, Rockford has struggled with structural poverty and unemployment within concentrated geographies of the City. Despite this challenge, Rockford continues has dramatically improved its school system, invested heavily in its capital infrastructure, and downtown business activity as well as activity at Chicago-Rockford International Airport is thriving.

Rockford community websites: [gorockford.com](http://gorockford.com), [rockfordil.gov](http://rockfordil.gov)

### **Fire Department Profile**

The Rockford Fire Department is the second largest fire department in the state of Illinois. There are over 300 employees represented by uniformed firefighters, civilians, and 911 Center personnel. The Department provides firefighting, emergency medical, hazardous material mitigation, extrication, water rescue, mobile integrated healthcare program, and other technical rescue services to the 150,000 residents of Rockford. Annually, the Department



responds to over 29,000 emergency incidents. The City is protected by nine engines, four ladders, and seven Advanced Life Support Ambulances housed at 11 fire stations strategically located through Rockford. The Fire Department maintains an ISO Class 2 rating and has been Accredited through the Center for Public Safety Excellence since 2011 and the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services since 2015.

The Operations Division includes Fire Suppression, Emergency Medical Services, Special Operations, and Emergency Services Disaster Agency. The Operations Division is administered by a Division Chief, six District Chiefs, and an administrative assistant. The Rockford Fire Department provides fire suppression for the City of Rockford with 13 fire suppression apparatus responding from 11 stations located throughout the city. These apparatus include: 9 engine companies, and 4 Ladder Companies.

In Rockford, Emergency Medical Services are provided by Paramedic and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). At any given time, approximately 240 firefighters are certified as paramedics. These individuals are dual-role personnel who work a 24-hour shift. They divide their time 12 hours to the ambulance and 12 hours to the fire suppression company to which they are assigned. Each engine, and ladder, company are equipped with an automatic defibrillator which facilitates early defibrillation, a proven lifesaving intervention, and other advanced life support equipment and medications.

The Rockford Hazardous Materials Team is a highly trained, specialized unit within the department and is located at Station #7, 2323 Sawyer Rd. Calls answered involve some type of hazardous material or situation. Included in this category are fuel, natural gas, and chemical spills or leaks. Our certified rescue divers function as a part of the MABAS Division 8 Water Rescue and Recovery Team. The team respond to any water emergency in the City limits and will respond to MABAS requests within Winnebago County. Technical Rescue includes calls answered for extrication, confined space rescue, high angle rescue, and elevator rescue. Extrication from vehicles, machinery, etc. is the responsibility of Engine Company #4 (2959 Shaw Woods Dr), Engine Company #8 (505 Sherman St), and Engine Company #11 (2117 Calgary Ct). The Rockford Fire Department Technical Rescue Team is equipped and trained in above and below ground emergencies. Ladder company personnel are also trained to handle elevator rescues.

The Fire Prevention Division is responsible for a wide array of duties related to the prevention of fire in the community. They are responsible for the inspection of commercial/industrial property and the interpretation of fire prevention codes and ordinances concerning the properties. The Prevention Division is also responsible for presenting talks and demonstrations

related to fire prevention and public education, fire ground investigative activities and related follow-up arson investigations, and the review of plans for construction within the city for proper fire and life safety code adherences. This division includes a Division Chief, a Fire Prevention Coordinator, 6 Fire Investigators/Fire Inspectors, and a senior clerk.

The 911 Division is responsible for taking emergency 911 and non-emergency calls for the City of Rockford, and dispatching the appropriate fire, police, and emergency medical equipment. The goal of the 911 Center is to provide the vital link between citizens of Rockford and the appropriate emergency service agencies for fire, police, and emergency medical service. Our goal is accomplished by receiving incoming emergency and non-emergency calls for service from citizens; providing pre-arrival medical instructions to the citizens until the appropriate agencies arrive at the scene; ensuring that citizens receive public safety services by dispatching the appropriate fire, police, and emergency medical service in the most expeditious manner. The 911 Division is staffed by a Division Administrator, Training Supervisor, IT Support Technician, Support Technician, Business Manager, four Shift Supervisors, four Assistant Shift Supervisors, twelve Fire Telecommunicators, twenty-eight Police Telecommunicators, and a senior clerk.

The Training Division is responsible for serving the public with responsible administrative and management work in planning, organizing, directing, and supervising the Fire Service training program and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) program to meet Department needs. The Training Division is staffed by a Division Chief, Fire Training Coordinator, EMS Training Coordinator, two Mobile Integrated Healthcare Managers, and a senior clerk.

The Administrative Affairs Division is responsible for serving the public with specialized support and supervisory work in performing varied and complex administrative duties in the fire service. The Administrative Affairs Division is staffed by a Division Chief and a senior clerk.

The Fire Equipment and Safety Division is responsible for serving the public with administrative support work in the planning, management, and supervision of capital purchasing, vehicle and building maintenance activities for the Fire Department. The Fire Equipment and Safety Division is staffed by a Logistics Chief, Fire Maintenance Coordinator, and three Fire Equipment Specialists.

### **City Organization**

The City of Rockford is a non-home rule community that operates under the Mayor-Council form of government. The Council consists of a Mayor who is elected at-large and 14 aldermen



who are elected by their respective wards. The City Council sets the overall policies for the operation of the government, and the Mayor is the full-time CEO to carry out council policies, assisted by a professional City Administrator who oversees daily operations as CAO. The Mayor is responsible for the appointment of all City Department Heads, with the exception of the Fire and Police Chief, who are appointed by the Fire and Police Commission. There are ten departments within the City organization, including Fire, Police, Public Works, Community and Economic Development, Legal, Finance, Information Technology, Health and Human Services, Human Resources, and the Office of the Mayor.

The City has established seven “Guiding Principles” creating the foundation of work, in serving the community and ensuring a high quality of life for all residents. These seven principles (Leadership & Communication, Economy & Finances, Safety, Infrastructure & Investment, Business Climate, Entertainment & Quality of Life Safe & Vibrant Neighborhoods (Resident Quality & Inclusion) and Education) serve as the vehicle to accomplish the City’s vision of a high quality of life for all residents. The City stresses best practices and is one of the few cities in the country that has both nationally accredited police and fire departments.

### **City Employment**

The City of Rockford is committed to hiring and employing without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, age, disability, pregnancy, marital status, military discharges status, order of protection status, sexual orientation, genetic information, citizenship, gender identity or other factors prohibited by law.

## **FUTURE STEPS**

### **Background Investigation**

If you are selected as finalist in the process and wish to continue in the process, you must consent to a background investigation.

### **Timeline**

There will be phone interviews conducted in August and September. Then, during the week of October 6<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Meet and Greet with the community and an Assessment Center.

***The City of Rockford is an Equal Opportunity Employer***