



# Deputy Fire Chief Recruitment

Applications Due By  
April 10, 2026



## Sterling Fire Department Deputy Fire Chief Position Opening

The City of Sterling is seeking a dynamic and innovative candidate who demonstrates strong leadership and management skills for its next Deputy Fire Chief. The Sterling Fire Department has undertaken a number of progressive initiatives and desires a Deputy Chief that will continue these efforts.

### Who We Are – Sterling Fire Department



The Sterling Fire Department was organized in 1872 and covers an area of 82 sq. miles from 2 strategically located fire stations. The department serves over 15,000 residents within the City and is contracted for responses within the Sterling Rural Fire District. The main station is staffed by 1 Officer and 3 firefighters and the sub-station is staffed by 1 officer and 1 firefighter both on a 24-hour basis. The Department has 19 career personnel who are supported by the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and a full-time executive assistant. In 2025, the department responded to over 1,832 calls for service. The Emergency Medical System (EMS) is hospital based with Advanced Life Support unit response and transport. The Department responds

to urgent and critical nature EMS incidents, auto accidents, and patient assists with our EMS partner organization at the EMT-Basic level.

Sterling Fire is a member of MABAS Division 30 and has members on the Division's Technical Rescue Teams. The Department enjoys a strong automatic aid response system with the Rock Falls Fire Department situated across the Rock River on a majority of all incident type responses. A regional training facility is in the planning stages with the Rock Falls Fire Department bringing a joint training tower and future training facility / campus to the area. Apparatus includes 2 Engines, 1 Tower Ladder, 2 Tenders, a Water Rescue Unit, Brush truck and various support and command units.





Sterling uses a Council-Manager form of government, with a Mayor and 6 Aldermen, of whom 2 are elected at-large. The Deputy Fire Chief reports directly to the Fire Chief. Sterling firefighters are members of IAFF Local 2301 and the current collective bargaining agreement is in effect through April 30, 2026.

## Our Community

Sterling is located just off of I-88, midway between the Quad Cities and Rockford, along the Rock River. Sterling is home to approximately 15,000 people, though the urban area is close to 25,000 including the twin city of Rock Falls. The area was settled in the 1800's and Sterling quickly became a manufacturing and innovation hub, home to major steel and hardware manufacturers.



STERLING RIVERFRONT PARK



Today Sterling is a transformative community, shifting from heavy manufacturing to health care, specialized manufacturing, distribution and agriculture. The City recently awarded a \$5m contract to create a new riverfront park on an old industrial site and is actively cleaning up more industrial sites for reuse. A developer has been retained to help in the riverfront transformation. The City is home to acclaimed public and parochial schools, a top-rated municipally owned

hospital and a nationally recognized park district with amenities unrivaled in a community Sterling's size. For more information, please visit our website at [www.sterling-il.gov](http://www.sterling-il.gov)



## The Position

The Deputy Fire Chief will immediately be responsible for managing the department's training program, as well as overseeing the operations section. This will include maintaining our training program that sets our department at the top of all standards. The Deputy Chief will assist the Fire Chief in the day-to-day activities, including Code Enforcement, but focus primarily on training and operations. The Deputy Chief responds to initial alarms, automatic aid, mutual aid and other incident responses as part of their duty assignments. They assist with off-duty Chief Officer coverages as well.



## Leadership Style and Attributes

The ideal candidate will be a strong leader who earns respect from the Department members, a forward-thinking leader who plans for change and growth, an intuitive listener with problem solving and organizational skills, experienced in personnel/union management, has strong verbal and written communications skills, experienced managing training and operations of an active fire department. They will maintain a healthy relationship within the Fire Department, the city employees, the elected officials, the public and surrounding agencies and can work collaboratively with other city departments to bring innovative ideas and modernization of operations forward.





## Education and Experience

Desirable education and background elements may be part of a professional development plan and considered part of the ideal candidate's professional goal assessment discussed or demonstrated during the application process. The Fire Department desires a candidate with a strong education and background who can immediately put experience and education to work in the department. Candidates will have attained the following minimum educational and experience requirements prior to the time of hire.

## Required Qualifications

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Minimum age: 21.
- Meet residency requirements within six months of hire or be available for recall.
- At least 5 years of fire service experience with 3 years in a shift officer's role.
- Certification: Illinois Advanced Fire Officer or equivalent.
- Certification: Illinois Incident Safety Officer or equivalent.
- Ability to obtain Illinois Chief Fire Officer within 5 years.
- NIMS-compliant certifications.
- Ability to operate emergency apparatus and apply safety protocols.
- Pass all required physical, psychological, and substance screenings.
- Effective written and oral communication skills.
- Valid state driver's license.
- Obtain NFA Training Program Manager within 2 years.

## Preferred Qualifications

- Certified Illinois Chief Fire Officer (or higher credential).
- Knowledge in fire suppression, prevention, and investigation practices.
- Familiarity with city geography and critical infrastructure.
- Experience using fire department software systems.
- Associate's degree or higher in Fire Science, Public Safety, or related field.
- Certifications: Fire Inspector I and II.
- Experience as an Incident Commander in multi-alarm events.
- Proven experience managing a training program in a similar-sized department.



Candidates can view the full position description at <https://www.sterling-il.gov/Jobs.aspx>

## Compensation and Benefits

This position is posted with an expected starting salary of \$111,629 with a full benefits package.

The City of Sterling offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes:

- Medical, Dental, Vision, Life Insurance
- Downstate Fire Pension
- Sick Time
- Vacation Time
- Flex Spending
- 6% of base pay in lieu of holidays
- Education Incentives

## Application Process

During the application period, interested professionals should submit the following:

1. Cover Letter
2. Resume
3. Pre-Interview Essays
4. Professional Reference List

All questions should be directed to the Fire Chief, David Northcutt. (815) 632-6682 or [dnorthcutt@sterling-il.gov](mailto:dnorthcutt@sterling-il.gov) Completed application packages will be accepted until April 10, 2026. Applications should be mailed to:

Sterling Fire Department  
Attn: Fire Chief  
110 W 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Sterling, IL 61081



## Hiring Process

It is anticipated that the city will invite several well-qualified candidates to participate in the Assessment Center and Interview process on April 30, 2026. Following the Assessment Center, applicants selected as finalists may also be invited for additional interviews. Applicants will also be subject to a complete background investigation. A psychological exam, drug test, and physical examination will be required for the successful candidate upon a conditional job offer from the City of Sterling.

Additional information about the City of Sterling can be found on the city website: [www.sterling-il.gov](http://www.sterling-il.gov)

## Essay Exercise

In order to get a better sense of your writing skills and additional insights into your experience, please answer the following questions. Limit your responses to no more than a single page per question and submit your answers as part of your application by April 10, 2026 (first review, open until filled).

1. Following current standards, describe how you will ensure the Sterling Fire Department ensures all required training and department desired training is completed. Design an annual training calendar that could be followed.
2. What is the impact of the proposed changes to the OSHA Fire Brigade Standard (1910.156) on the Sterling Fire Department?
3. What is your approach to creating a great relationship with the Fire Chief and other staff members of the Sterling Fire Department?
4. Describe 3 innovations or modernizations you have brought into an organization.
5. What are your emergency incident priorities and how do you ensure they are met on active scenes?



# Sterling Fire Department

## Operations Manual

### Deputy Chief Job Description

100 – Rules & Regulations

Effective: June 2025

REPLACES / REVISES: New

Authorized by

Chief Northcutt

P103

LOW  
RISK

### Purpose

To define the responsibilities, authority, and qualifications for the Deputy Fire Chief, ensuring effective support to the Fire Chief and departmental operations.

### Scope

The Deputy Chief is appointed by the Fire Chief with City Manager approval and serves as the second-in-command of the Sterling Fire Department. This role encompasses administrative and operational oversight, and the Deputy Chief may act in the Fire Chief's absence.

### Policy

The Deputy Chief shall demonstrate professional, ethical, and responsible behavior in all actions and decisions in accordance with department standards.

### Responsibility

The Deputy Chief reports directly to the Fire Chief and manages department operations, training programs, compliance, and special initiatives. This role assumes command when required and supports strategic planning and personnel development efforts.

### Definitions

None.

### Essential Duties and Responsibilities

#### Administrative Leadership

- Assist in supervision and evaluation of all personnel, including safety and performance.
- Provide input on departmental budget and strategic plan.
- Ensure NFIRS compliance and reporting.
- Attend City Council/community meetings as requested.
- Assist with personnel scheduling and supervision.
- Initiate disciplinary actions and enforce policies and procedures.
- Respond to public complaints as assigned.
- Oversee department-wide training calendar and certification tracking.
- Lead mentoring, officer development, and post-incident analysis programs.
- Manage assigned projects (technology, facilities, CRR initiatives).
- Maintain liaison with Code Enforcement and Police Department.
- Support fire code enforcement as assigned by the Fire Chief.

#### Emergency Operations

- Respond to alarms and assume incident command when necessary.
- Support the Fire Chief in overseeing operational readiness and incident response.
- Assist in ensuring apparatus and equipment readiness with the Maintenance Group.



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- Supervise officers in execution of operations and training programs.
- Enforce safety protocols and ensure appropriate use of PPE and tools.
- Perform additional emergency duties as assigned.

### External Relations & Development

- Promote mutual aid coordination and interagency cooperation.
- Attend professional development, trade, and civic meetings.
- Foster internal and interdepartmental relationships across City agencies.
- Perform other duties as assigned to meet departmental needs.

### Qualifications

#### Required

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- Minimum age: 21.
- Meet residency requirements within six months of hire or be available for recall.
- At least 5 years of fire service experience with 3 years in a shift officer's role.
- Certification: Illinois Advanced Fire Officer or equivalent.
- Certification: Illinois Incident Safety Officer or equivalent.
- Ability to obtain Illinois Chief Fire Officer within 5 years.
- NIMS-compliant certifications.
- Ability to operate emergency apparatus and apply safety protocols.
- Pass all required physical, psychological, and substance screenings.
- Effective written and oral communication skills.
- Valid state driver's license.
- Obtain NFA Training Program Manager within 2 years.

#### Desired

- Certified Illinois Chief Fire Officer (or higher credential).
- Knowledge in fire suppression, prevention, and investigation practices.
- Familiarity with city geography and critical infrastructure.
- Experience using fire department software systems.
- Associate's degree or higher in Fire Science, Public Safety, or related field.
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**Revision Status:** June 2025 New