

# LEANDER CITIZENS GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THEIR FIRE DEPARTMENT



***SAVING LIVES AND PROPERTY WITH  
COMMITMENT AND EXCELLENCE***

## A Citizen's Guide to the Leander Fire Department

### Organization and Structure

- LFD is comprised of several major **sections and divisions**, including:
  - Operations (field personnel at fire stations);
  - Emergency Prevention (includes public education, inspectors, and arson investigators);
  - Associate Program (human resources, public information, financial, and budgeting functions);
  - Special Operations (technical rescues, water rescues); and
  - Emergency Management (Disaster Preplanning, Readiness, and Homeland Security)
- LFD **facilities** currently include 2 active fire stations plus a fire station under construction. The facilities also include a new training field and new administrative offices:
  1. Headquarters at 701 Leander Dr
  2. Central Fire Station 201 N Brushy
  3. Fire Station 2 1950 Crystal Falls Pkwy
  4. Property for Fire Station 3 Sonny Dr/US Hwy 183 (Planning Stage)
  5. Property for Fire Training Field Sonny Dr/US Hwy 183 (Planning Stage)
  6. Property for Fire Station CR 180 at New water tower site (No Station)
- LFD is **dispatched** from the Williamson County Emergency Communication Center, that is located in Combined Communication Center at Georgetown. The center is designed to dispatch fire departments using a National Recognized Dispatch process and manages most of all public safety agencies to help for a unified approach to protect and solve public safety issues.
- All volunteer firefighter cadets go through a 8-week, 100-hour **Training Academy** (located at the LFD facility on Leander Drive). The course includes physical training, as well as a challenging academic program. Medical training is the next training program that takes an additional 200 hours of the course work. To graduate, all cadets must pass exams and skill testing. Career staff must complete a State recognized 500 hour training program, plus 200 additional hours of medical training program. After completing training the staff must pass national and state administered exams to be eligible for employment with the City of Leander.
- **Operations** personnel make up most of the department. Firefighters in the field work 24 hours on, 48 hours off and change shifts at 7 am every day. The shifts are referred to as A, B, and C shifts. The team assigned to a particular apparatus (engine, squad, quint, or rescue unit) and the apparatus itself is known as a “company.”
- The **rank structure** is as follows (in ascending order): firefighter, driver/pump operator, lieutenant (first supervisory rank), captain, district chief, deputy chief, and fire chief. Cadets are those currently in the Training Academy; upon graduation, they become probationary firefighters for six months. Upon satisfactory completion of their probation and passing probationary exams, they become firefighters. Promotions to all ranks are decided strictly by scores in defined testing process.
- In the field, a **lieutenant** is in charge of the company he/she is in charge of the station. There are also lieutenants and captains assigned to staff positions (working 40 hours per week in an office).

- There is a **district chief** in charge of each shift. The district chief is in charge of all the stations/personnel in that district on that shift, they work 24-hour shifts. District chiefs may also be assigned to staff positions, such as safety, training, and professional standards. **All chiefs (all levels) wear white shirts (if in uniform).**
- The **deputy chief** is appointed by the fire chief from within the department. They must be a captain or above to be considered for the position. The **fire chief** is appointed by the City Manager and approved by the City Council. He/she does not have to be from within the department. The deputy chief and the fire chief are officed at headquarters at 701 Leander Dr. The **executive team** includes the fire chief, deputy chief, and district chiefs

### Emergency Response

- In addition to fire suppression, LFD is the City’s **first responder** in medical emergencies—firefighters arrive first on the scene and begin patient assessment and stabilization, usually before the arrival of the ambulance. All firefighters are certified as a minimum of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) with most being EMT –Intermediate or Paramedic. **Medical calls make up between 70-75 percent of LFD’s call volume.** Williamson County EMS is a separate county department that does patient transport.
- LFD also provides the City’s **hazardous materials** emergency response. The department works with other fire departments in Williamson County to provide a County Wide Hazardous materials Team.
- LFD also coordinates the City’s **special operations and technical rescue teams.** The team operates from Central Station. The **technical rescue team** responds to confined space and high-angle rescues using ropes and rappelling techniques. This team also responds to water rescues. These firefighters have gone through additional training and certifications but also respond to “routine” calls (fire, medical calls, etc.).
- The following is a basic description of the primary **fire apparatus:**
  1. **Engine** (a.k.a. “pumper”) – Basic firefighting apparatus assigned to every station that responds to all types of rescues, fires and medical calls. The vehicle carries a supply of 500 or 1,000 gallons of water plus medical equipment, including automatic defibrillators.
  2. **Squad** – Smaller than an engine and mounted with a smaller pump, this vehicle is easier to maneuver but carries fewer staff. The squad has the same primary missions of engines.
  3. **Quint**—something of a hybrid vehicle with capabilities of both an engine and a ladder. A quint is smaller than a ladder truck, which allows for better access in restricted space, but still carries water like an engine and has a 75-foot aerial ladder.
  4. **Rescue** – Provides specialized rescue and lighting, and responds to all hazardous conditions, hazmat alarms, rescues and structure fires.
  5. **Brush Trucks** – Four-wheel-drive vehicle that can carry 250 gallons of water into remote areas over rough terrain.
  6. **Tanker** – A vehicle that carries 2,000 gallons of water. Used when there is inadequate water supply, especially in remote areas.

- Each station has an assigned “**still alarm**” territory (meaning the response area if only one unit is required, such as most medical call). They also are assigned a larger area known as their “**box alarm**” territory. A “box” is a geographic area; there are several boxes within each district. A “box alarm” is a structure fire; there are three engines, two ladders/quints, a rescue unit and two chiefs that are attempted to be assigned to all box alarms. A **second alarm** normally is called when companies arrive at a box alarm and find significant fire; the total number of units assigned to the scene jumps approximately by three more companies for every alarm requested.
- Other frequently heard **types of alarms** include: **rescue alarms** (patient extraction, usually from a vehicle and requiring rescue tools, a.k.a. “jaws of life”); **hazardous conditions** (a spill or leak of a substance that could cause health or environmental damage); **hazmat alarm** (a more serious spill or leak of a substance that causes immediate concern for public health and/or environment); **technical rescues** (situations requiring high-angle or confined space rescues); **grass/brush alarms** (grass fires are usually small and contained; brush fires are larger and involve more dense vegetation). Second-alarm brush fires are often called when there is a risk of the fire spreading to structures and/or the fire is growing rapidly.
- To alert a company to respond to an alarm, dispatch “**tones out**” the station. The tones are followed by voice providing location and call type. At multi-company stations, the firefighters have to listen to determine which company (ies) are being dispatched.
- Companies responding to emergency calls go “**Code 3**” with lights and sirens; if there is no danger or hazard, they respond “**Code 1**” without lights or sirens.
- Incident response is coordinated from the **command post** at the scene. The “**incident commander**” (IC) is in charge of the scene (the IC changes upon companies’ arrivals, going up the chain of command as the incident escalates). At most working first alarms, the IC is a district chief and the command post is the chief’s vehicle (the on-duty operations chiefs have specially equipped vehicles). A flashing green light erected above the vehicle signals the command post location. LFD operates under the **Incident Command System (ICS)**, a leadership plan that details who does what on the scene.
- An “**exposure**” is property or a structure that is in danger of becoming damaged by a fire in another structure or by an outside fire.
- LFD provides “**mutual aid and automatic aid**” response to other departments. Mutual Aid is provided when requested by the fire departments in that jurisdiction. Those departments also provide mutual aid to LFD. LFD has automatic aid agreements with neighboring jurisdiction that means when structure fire is reported the communication system will dispatch an engine or truck company to the fire automatically; this insures the ability to get resources stated to the fire.

## Responsibilities of Firefighters

The responsibilities of today's firefighter extend well beyond the job title. In fact, nearly 70 percent of LFD's call volume consists of medical emergencies. Firefighters usually arrive first at the emergency scene to assess and stabilize the patient. When not responding to alarms, firefighters have a variety of other duties including fire code inspections, hydrant flow testing, and community presentations on fire prevention and other public safety issues.

### AT FIRES

▶ **Search and Rescue:** The first priority at a fire scene is to search for and rescue any potential victims in the involved structure.

▶ **Fire Suppression:** After confirming that human life is not endangered, firefighters work to extinguish the fire while stopping its spread. Before attacking the main body of the fire, "cut-off lines" are used to surround the fire so it will not spread to adjacent areas.

▶ **Salvage Operations:** Firefighters attempt to minimize damage to personal property from fire, water and smoke by using tarps and removing valuable items if possible.

▶ **Ventilation:** To reduce smoke and heat so that the fire may be located and extinguished more quickly, firefighters may ventilate the structure by cutting holes in the roof or breaking windows.

▶ **Customer Assistance :** Members of LFD are assigned to provide immediate direction to residents displaced by fire. LFD members help victims get their lives back to normal by advising them of appropriate services such as Red Cross, and helping them locate temporary housing, clothing, etc.

▶ **Mutual Aid:** In addition to incidents within the city limits, LFD has "mutual aid" agreements with several fire departments in surrounding communities to help each other on major incidents.

### OTHER INCIDENTS

▶ **Medical Call:** LFD provides first response on medical calls, assessing and stabilizing patients. LFD also helps our customers with medical questions and getting direction to social and medical services.

▶ **Alarm Activation:** A unit(s) is dispatched to locations where a fire or water flow alarm is set off.

▶ **Carbon Monoxide:** A unit is dispatched when a CO detector activates.

▶ **Broken Water Pipe:** Usually residential; an LFD unit will secure an area where water from a broken pipe could create a hazard until the Water repair assistance can be contacted or arrives for repairs.

▶ **Wire Down/Arc:** An LFD unit will secure an area where damaged wires could create a hazard until repair crew arrives. If necessary, firefighters may request that power be cut.

▶ **Rescue Alarm:** LFD extricates victims in accidents that result in vehicle entrapment.

▶ **Water Rescue:** The Swift Water Rescue Teams respond to incidents where a victim is in danger in a body of water (overturned boat, flashflood, etc.).

▶ **Technical Rescue:** The Technical Rescue Team will respond to incidents requiring high-angle or confined-space rescues.

▶ **Flooding:** In times of flooding, firefighters may rescue any trapped flood victims or barricade dangerous low water crossings.

▶ **Spill:** LFD cleans up small fuel spills that result from accidents or at gas stations.

▶ **Hazardous Condition:** LFD helps monitor and/or mitigate situations that involve hazardous materials such as chemical spills or ruptured gas lines.

▶ **Investigate Odor:** A unit will respond to a citizen concerned about an unusual or potentially dangerous odor and attempt to pinpoint its cause.

▶ **Lockout:** A unit will be sent to vehicle lockouts when an individual is endangered due to the situation.

#### **AT OTHER TIMES**

▶ **Fire and Life Safety Presentations:** Firefighters visit all elementary schools in the Leander Independent School District (as well as other area schools upon request) and make a three-part presentation directed at various grade levels.

▶ **Day Care Visits:** Upon request, firefighters visit day care centers and explain the basics of fire safety to children.

▶ **Community Service:** Some companies or stations independently arrange programs and develop relationships supporting youth groups, schools, or community organizations (Explorers, Big Brothers, etc.)

▶ **Station Tours:** Firefighters at stations welcome visitors, which sometimes include informal guests and other times are scheduled visits by community organizations.

▶ **Special Appearances:** Firefighters and apparatus often fill requests by communities or organizations to make appearances at special events such as parades, festivals, etc.

▶ **Inspections:** Leander firefighters conducts maintenance inspections annually of existing structures.

▶ **Hydrant Flow Tests:** Firefighters check flow capacities of water mains for existing and new structures in the city.

▶ **Pre-Fire Plans:** Firefighters often familiarize themselves with structures located in their territories to identify hazards and risks so they are better prepared for an emergency response.

▶ **Mandatory Physical Training:** Firefighters are required to do physical training for a minimum of one hour per shift.

▶ **Daily Training:** Firefighters must put in a minimum of two hours per shift training covering a variety topics such as territory familiarization, maps, or fire protection features in buildings.

▶ **Skills Improvement Training:** Advanced training in a particular discipline that often involves multiple companies.

▶ **Annual Continuing Education:** Minimum of 20 hours annually of set curriculum for the fire activities.

▶ **Hazmat Training:** Eight-hour continuing education component that is separate from the 20-hour annual requirement. All personnel must be at "Operations" level of hazmat certification; hazmat team members require 20 hours and are "Expert" level.

▶ **Specialty Training requirements:** Specialty units such as technical rescue team, hazmat team and swift water rescue team have additional training requirements.

▶ **Professional Development:** Firefighters at various ranks participate in professional development training to help prepare them for the next level of service.

▶ **Outside Training Opportunities:** Many firefighters seek training opportunities outside of LFD, often presented by professional fire service organizations. Examples include the National Fire Academy, incident command seminars, driving courses, etc.

▶ **Medical Continuing Education:** Firefighters are required to take 20 hours of continuing medical education in subjects designated by the Texas Department of Health.

▶ **Medical Refresher Training:** Firefighters take two annual refresher courses -- Automatic External Defibrillator and Infectious Disease Precautions.

▶ **Certifications:** Firefighters periodically must renew medical certifications each year as required by both the Texas Department of Health and the Leander/Williamson County Medical Director. These processes involve skills assessments and written exams.

▶ **Apparatus Maintenance:** Routine maintenance and restocking of apparatus in stations.

▶ **Upkeep of Station:** Firefighters are responsible for general cleaning and routine maintenance of station building.

▶ **Smoke Detector Installation:** LFD provides free smoke detectors to low-income families, which firefighters install upon request and in conjunction with scheduled "drives."

▶ **Emergency Management:** LFD is responsible for planning, responses, and preparation for all types of natural and man made disasters such as terrorist events, tornadoes, and floods. The department is responsible for providing a management overhead team to keep the City functioning during disaster.

# Types of Equipment used by Leander Fire Department

## ENGINE (a.k.a. "pumper")



- ▶ **Definition:** basic firefighting apparatus assigned to Station 1. This unit responds to all types of rescues, fires and medical calls; carries a water supply and hose.
- ▶ **Primary roles:** placement of hose lines to supply water for rescue, fire extinguishment, exposure protection, patient evaluation and stabilization on medical calls
- ▶ **Water carried:** 1000 gallons
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** medical equipment (including automatic defibrillator), either a 1500- or 1250 gallon-per-minute fire pump, hose, attack hydraulic rescue tool for vehicle accidents.
- ▶ **Amount of hose carried:** 1000 feet of 5-inch hose, 800 feet of 3-inch hose, two 200-foot quick-attack firefighting hose lines, 250-foot of 2-inch hose.
- ▶ **Staffing:** 3-5 firefighters (3 is the minimal number for this unit to be in operation)
- ▶ **Number in department:** 3
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 1

## RESCUE UNIT



- ▶ **Definition:** a vehicle that responds to all rescue alarms, hazardous condition alarms and structure fires.
- ▶ **Primary roles:** to provide specialized rescue capabilities and hazardous materials mitigation, light the fireground when appropriate, and cut off utilities at fires.
- ▶ **Water carried:** none
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** high-powered lighting, rescue tools, and rescue boat
- ▶ **Staffing:** 2 firefighters (not staffed, must use volunteers and call back)
- ▶ **Number in department:** 1
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 0

## QUINT



- ▶ **Definition:** something of a hybrid vehicle with capabilities of both an engine and a ladder. A quint is smaller than a ladder truck, which allows for better access in restricted space, but still carries water like an engine and has a 75-foot aerial ladder.
- ▶ **Primary role:** dependant on conditions at time of arrival; may function as an engine company or ladder company; may conduct two operations simultaneously  
Water carried: 500 gallons
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** 75-foot aerial ladder, 1500 gallon-per-minute fire pump, hose  
Amount of hose carried: 500 feet of 3-inch hose, 1000 feet of 5-inch hose
- ▶ **Staffing:** 6 firefighters (not staffed, must use volunteers and call back)
- ▶ **Number in department:** 1
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 0

## BRUSH TRUCK



- ▶ **Definition:** four-wheel drive vehicle used to carry water into remote areas or rough terrain that engines cannot access
- ▶ **Primary role:** to reach fires that are located off-road and difficult to access such as brush and grass fires
- ▶ **Water carried:** carry 300 gallons
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** wildland firefighting hand tools
- ▶ **Staffing:** 2 firefighters (not staffed, must use volunteers and call back)

- ▶ **Number in department:** 2
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 1



### TANKER

- ▶ **Definition:** a vehicle that carries a large supply of water used when there is inadequate City water supply, especially in remote areas
- ▶ **Primary role:** to provide an additional water supply Water carried: 2,000 gallons
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** some carry a portable pump; others have portable tank.
- ▶ **Number in department:** 3
- ▶ **Staffing:** 2 firefighters (not staffed, must use volunteers and call back)
- ▶ **Number in department:** 1
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 0



### SQUAD

- ▶ **Definition:** a vehicle with most of the same capabilities as a traditional engine/pumper that is smaller in size and easier to maneuver; responds to all types of medical calls, rescues and fires.
- ▶ **Primary roles:** patient evaluation and stabilization on medical calls, response to all types of emergencies
- ▶ **Water carried:** 300 gallons
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** medical equipment (including automatic defibrillator), a 500 gallon-per-minute fire pump, hose.
- ▶ **Amount of hose carried:** 800 feet of 3-inch hose.
- ▶ **Staffing:** 2-4 firefighters
- ▶ **Number in department:** 1
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 0



### Command

- ▶ **Definition:** a vehicle with specialize equipment to provide supervision and direction at emergency events; responds to all types of medical calls, rescues and fires.
- ▶ **Primary roles:** Used by on duty District Chief to respond to emergent and non-emergent events.
- ▶ **Equipment carried:** medical equipment (including automatic defibrillator), safety monitor equipment, accountability tracking and disaster tracking equipment.
- ▶ **Staffing:** 1-2 firefighters
- ▶ **Number in department:** 1
- ▶ **Number of reserve units:** 0

## SPECIAL OPERATIONS TEAMS

All Leander firefighters receive basic training in water rescues, hazardous materials mitigation, and high-angle/confined-space rescues. However, members of LFD's specialty team have obtained additional training and certifications. These firefighters respond to medical calls, fires, and other "routine" calls, but also are dispatched to provide their special expertise as needed.

The Special Operations Section has evolved into a defined regional recognized team. The team is directly supervised by a District Chiefs the team is made up of 25 members who must maintain other department duties and requirements.

Special Operations encompasses three special disciplines: Confine Space/Collapse Rescue, Rope Rescue, and Water Rescue. The Search and Rescue team responds to either confined space or high angle rescues. The Special Operations Section keeps on top of new procedures and technology, ensuring that members maintain their certification and training levels, and obtaining materials and equipment.





▶ The Water Rescue Teams equipment is stored and the crews respond from Central Fire Station. The firefighters assigned to the water rescue team have the training and equipment to perform rescues and assist people caught by rapidly rising flood waters. LFD also has a boat that is kept on the Rescue unit that is available for response to all parts of Williamson County.

▶ The Rope Rescue Team responds to high-angle, cliffs, and ravens that require the use of ropes and rappelling techniques.

▶ The Team responds to incidents involving people trapped in confined spaces, area below ground, man holes, and trenches. The team also responds to building and structure collapse.



# How Can I be involved with the Fire Department?

-  **Volunteer Program** – Leander Fire Department is a combination department which means we have both paid and non-paid (Volunteer) firefighters that respond to emergency calls. Each responder is trained and provided safety equipment. Citizens in the Leander Area may volunteer by completing the application process and participated in the firefighter training programs. Volunteer firefighters have the same responsibilities and do the same job as career firefighters, with several of our volunteers moving to career firefighter position in both Leander and other departments.
-  **Associate Program** – Leander Fire Department also has a program for people that want to be involved in the department but do not feel like they can meet the demands of a firefighter can participate in the Associate Program. The Associate Program works in the department providing support roles for firefighters and fire department functions. These people respond to emergent situations and provide support without being in placed in harms way.
-  **Donation on Monthly Water bill** – Every Citizen in the City of Leander that receives a water bill from the City of Leander may add a donation amount to the water bill every month. These funds go straight to the volunteer fire department and are used in fire prevention and training events. If every person and business that received a water bill from the City of Leander would donate \$1 per month the department would be able to fund fire prevention education materials for every child in the elementary schools in Leander, Advanced EMS training for every volunteer in the department, and replacement of older firefighter protective clothing.
-  **Citizens Fire Academy** – Attend a Citizens Fire Academy to learn more about your fire department. During your attendance at the Citizens Fire Academy you will learn what the firefighters do and how you can be better be prepared in your home and business in case of a fire, medical emergency, or disaster. Plus it is a lot of fun.