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City of Duluth - Fire Department

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DATE: 1/27/2022

SUBJECT: Duluth Fire onboards largest new recruit class in decades

BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer

NATURE OF INCIDENT:

CASE NO.:

INCIDENT DATE: 1/27/2022

INCIDENT TIME:

INCIDENT LOCATION:

Duluth Fire onboards largest new recruit class in decades

[Duluth, MN] The Duluth Fire Department is finishing onboarding twelve new recruits this week – the largest class to come in at once in decades. As unique as their overall size, this group is also starting on rigs differently than other classes thanks to new COVID-19 precautions.

Normally, new recruits are hired and spend two weeks going through training at the Lake Superior College Emergency Response Training Center (ERTC). Recruits practice working on everything from how to use a hose in different situations, to going through live scenarios that include structure fires, saving simulated victims, and putting out car fires. This group will do that in the spring if COVID-19 positivity rates decrease from what the state of Minnesota and our area is seeing to date.

“This onboarding has been challenging by only having four recruits in a room at a time,” Duluth Fire Training Officer Damon Laurion said. “We are still going through a lot of the orientation that any new firefighter would receive when they first start, but its frustrating to not be able to have the group go through the outdoor training initially that we know prepares them for the emergency response calls that we respond to.”

Instead, the group that is broken into three shifts will start working on assigned rigs at stations and receive increased training that all firefighters will go through together.

“More **H**ands **O**n Training (HOT) opportunities is something that our firefighters have been asking for,” Fire Chief Shawn Krizaj said. “With our recent retirements, there has been a lot of crew member changes. This is a great way to increase crew confidence and build trust for both the new hires and experienced firefighters moving into new assignments.”

“Everyone coming in has firefighting or EMT job experience or training,” Laurion said. “While we wish that we would have been able to put the group through the course that we normally do, to work side by side with our veteran firefighters will be great experience for them, and they will learn a lot just by doing the work.”

Normally, new recruits work out of the Headquarters station so that they can be close to fire administration staff, and get a feel for a large call volume that is diverse in the types of emergency response. Due to the large size of this class, recruits will be spread out at Headquarters, Lincoln Park, Spirit Valley and UMD stations.

“While all stations respond to structure fires and various medical calls, each station is as unique as the neighborhoods that they serve,” Laurion said. “Some respond to a large amount of water emergencies, some respond to a lot of trail rescues; they all offer different experiences that help shape the careers of firefighters.”

New recruits came from across the country to join the Department. Eight are from the local area, with the remaining four coming from as far away as Missouri and South Carolina.

“We had a really diverse pool this year which is nice to see,” Chief Shawn Krizaj said. “Each person that we hired brings their own story and experience to the department. That helps each of us to learn from each other, and is valuable for any team. We have been working on our recruiting efforts, and while we are the infant stages of building our recruiting materials, we hope to see the response that we saw from this group in years to come.”

The twelve recruits will serve a probationary period for a year before becoming a permanent member of the department.

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