

	 <b>STANDARD ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Subject:</b>	Background Screenings
	<b>Reference Number:</b>	SAP-DEP-034
	<b>Effective Date:</b>	23 February 2012
	<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	N/A
<b>Signature of Approval:</b>	 <b>J. Dan Eggleston, Chief</b>	

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to define the process for conducting a background screening on all applicants.

**Background:**

Proper selection and screening of personnel is a necessity to protect the individuals and communities served. It is incumbent upon all public safety agencies to conduct proper background screenings on the personnel providing vital emergency services to the public. Additionally, all licensed EMS agencies are required by Virginia law to conduct a criminal history background check through the Virginia State Police – Central Criminal Records Exchange no more than 60 days prior to the applicant’s affiliation with the EMS agency (12 VAC 5-31-540).

**Scope:**

This policy applies to the Albemarle County Fire and EMS System as defined by Ordinance.

**Definitions:**

- A. Background Screening – the process of authenticating information supplied to the department of station by an applicant in his or her resume, application, documentation, and/or interviews.
- B. Employment Background Investigations, Inc. (EBI, Inc.) – an independent, third-party conducting complete background screenings on volunteer applicants using a customized, web-based application.

**Policy:**

1. All applicants – career or volunteer – will undergo a thorough background screening prior to service. All volunteer applicants must complete and sign a *Permission to Release Information* form and the *EBI Notice and Acknowledgment* form on the back of the *Permission to Release Information* form before a background screening can be conducted. All career applicants must complete and sign a *Permission to Release Information* form before a background screening can be conducted.
  - A. It is recommended that the *Permission to Release Information* form be notarized; however, this is not a requirement.
2. Each fire department and rescue squad shall submit, at a minimum, a criminal history background check for every member, through the Virginia State Police, utilizing Form SP-230.
  - A. This form may be obtained from the Virginia State Police – Forms website, or through links from the Virginia Office of EMS website
  - B. Completed forms must be mailed to the Virginia State Police at the specified address.
  - C. Fire and EMS agencies are not charged for this service as they are exempt by statute
  - D. Upon receipt of the criminal background records search by the Virginia State Police, and any other source, the fire department or rescue squad should:
    - i. Carefully review the individual record(s) and determine suitability for public safety affiliation

- ii. Place a letter in the individual's personnel file that attests to their qualification or disqualification, based upon review of the individual's criminal history background check
  - iii. Destroy the criminal history background report(s) or provide it to the applicant. Agencies should avoid maintaining detailed background check records on file.
  - iv. By law, licensed EMS agencies are required to have a record for each individual affiliated with the agency documenting the results of the VSP background check. The background check shall not be older than 60 days prior to the individual's affiliation. Should an audit establish that an existing member did not have a Virginia State Police criminal history background check performed and/or documentation of those results, the department shall take immediate steps to correct the deficiency.
3. Each fire department or rescue squad shall obtain and review a Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) record for each member prior to authorization to operate any department vehicle. This record should not be older than 90 days to be considered valid.
  - A. It is recommended that the DMV records check be considered at the time of affiliation
  - B. Requiring an applicant to provide the department with a current copy of their DMV record is acceptable
4. Exclusions to affiliation or authorization to operate a department vehicle, based upon criminal history (including specific driving offenses) are identified in Virginia law (EMS Regulations – 12 VAC 5-31). Every EMS agency must comply with these requirements. More stringent requirements may be adopted by any department as deemed appropriate.
5. Additional background information should be obtained for:
  - A. Any applicant who has recently moved to Virginia from another state
  - B. Individuals where there is conflicting background information and/or a concern that the background history is incomplete
6. To obtain an additional level of background check, the fire department or rescue squad shall submit a background request using an online, web-based service .
  - i. The vendor for the service is Employment Background Investigations, Inc. (EBI, Inc.), or equivalent.
  - ii. The web-based program allows a single, authorized representative at stations to conduct a background screening for an applicant.
  - iii. The chief or his/her designee will be the single, authorized representative, and he/she will be the only individual at the station with access to the background screenings conducted for prospective volunteers.
  - iv. A single, designated ACFR staff person will serve as the account "Administrator."
  - v. The Department of Fire Rescue is billed directly for the services.
  - vi. The turn-around time for the results of the screening is three-to-five (3-5) business days.
- B. Tier I screening:
  - Social Security Number Trace
  - Criminal Court Search – Any County of Residence
  - National Criminal Records Database (NCRD) Search
- C. Tier II screening: For individuals who may have "questionable" results from a Tier I screening, or if the station chief or designate feels additional information is necessary to make an informed decision, a Tier II screening may be completed. ALSO REQUIRED: An additional Permission to Release Information form must be completed prior to a Tier II authorization. The station representative is required to explain to the applicant that a complete educational, employment, and financial background check will be conducted.
  - National Credit History
  - Education Verification of Highest Degree Awarded
  - Employment Verification with Three (3) Most Recent Employers
    - i. Due to the cost of these services, Tier II screenings will only be conducted on individuals who may have "questionable" results from a Tier I screening, or if the station chief or designate determines additional information is necessary to make an informed decision.
    - ii. A Tier II screening always requires *prior* ACFR staff authorization.