

NOW RECRUITING!



FIRE CHIEF



Confidential Recruitment

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Open until July 17





THE COMMUNITY

Orange County is nestled along the Southern California coast between Los Angeles and San Diego counties. As the third largest populated county in California, the vibrancy of this nearly 800 square mile jewel places it as the thirtieth largest economy in the world. Orange County has 34 cities serving a population of more than three million people.

A desirable place to live and work, Orange County is known for its ideal weather, recreation, and a wide range of cultural arts. Many of its public and private schools are ranked among the best in the nation. The county also has top rated attractions such as Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, pristine ocean beaches, and is the home of major league sports teams, including baseball's Angels and hockey's Ducks. Orange County boasts a thriving business economy and a well-educated work force.

ABOUT OCFA

Headquartered in Irvine, California, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that serves approximately 1.9 million residents in a 586-square mile area, with 188,800 acres of wildland. The OCFA was formed on March 1, 1995, transitioning from the Orange County Fire Department to a JPA. The service area includes 23-member cities and the unincorporated areas of Orange County.

A 25-member Board of Directors governs the OCFA and is comprised of elected officials appointed to represent each of the member cities and two representatives from the County Board of Supervisors. The OCFA is managed by an appointed Fire Chief who reports directly to the OCFA Board of Directors. By pooling resources, the OCFA can purchase additional fire engines and specialized equipment that some cities could not afford on their own. The OCFA does not allocate equipment based on city boundaries. Instead, all member cities and the County have access to resources, including sophisticated rescue equipment, specialized apparatus, and helicopters.

The OCFA is the largest regional fire service organization in Orange County and one of the largest in California. OCFA's all-hazards approach ensures readiness for any emergency, with a proven ability to manage complex, multi-agency regional incidents. The OCFA has a staff of approximately 1,580. Of those, 1,210 are professional firefighters and chief officers and 370 are non-sworn support staff working at the Regional Fire Operations and Training Center facility (RFOTC) in Irvine. These personnel provide front-line services, including prevention, education, dispatch, emergency response, and technical and administrative support. Additionally, OCFA Reserve Firefighters staff 10 stations throughout Orange County.

Interim Fire Chief TJ McGovern has announced his upcoming retirement, at the completion of the recruitment process, and will not be a candidate in the current Fire Chief recruitment process.



THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The OCFA Board of Directors is seeking a Fire Chief who is a proven fire service executive and leader of **outstanding character**, fully committed to shaping and advancing the future of OCFA. The OCFA Board envisions a Fire Chief who possesses strong **financial and administrative acumen**, coupled with the ability to foster and sustain **meaningful relationships** with internal and external stakeholders, including executive staff, labor groups, member agencies, elected officials, and the communities served by OCFA. A successful candidate will **embrace the OCFA culture** and **inspire confidence** internally and externally so that the organization can continue to thrive as the **nation's premier fire agency**.



Qualified candidates from within and outside the OCFA are encouraged to apply.

The OCFA Board of Directors is seeking a Fire Chief that brings the following five qualities:

1. Executive Leadership & Strategic Vision

The ideal candidate will be a proven and respected executive leader whose actions consistently reflect the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. They will demonstrate humility while maintaining the command presence necessary to lead. The successful Fire Chief will remain calm and steady handling both administrative challenges and large-scale crises, during which the Fire Chief is often the face of the organization. They will possess strong credibility with employees, labor representatives, elected officials, and community members alike. Additionally, they will be a strategic thinker who can anticipate future challenges and opportunities while positioning OCFA for continued long-term success.

2. Administrative, Financial, & Governance Excellence

The next Fire Chief will possess exceptional administrative and financial management skills, with a demonstrated ability to oversee complex budgets and steward public resources responsibly. They will understand how to balance operational priorities and fiscal sustainability while maintaining transparency to foster trust. The successful candidate will have a comprehensive understanding of public-sector governance and an appreciation for OCFA's unique Joint Powers Authority structure and the diverse needs of its member agencies and the unincorporated County areas. They will be comfortable communicating financial and organizational matters to a variety of audiences and ensuring stakeholders have confidence in the agency's stewardship. A collaborative and transparent management approach will be essential to maintaining trust throughout the organization.



3. Collaborative Relationship Builder

The OCFA Board seeks a Fire Chief who excels at building and maintaining strong, productive relationships with a broad range of stakeholders. The successful candidate will establish credibility and trust with the OCFA Board of Directors while fostering positive working relationships with labor organizations, executive staff, member city leaders, elected officials, regional partners, and community stakeholders. They will demonstrate strong political acumen and the ability to navigate complex and sometimes competing interests in a thoughtful, diplomatic, and professional manner. The ideal leader will be approachable and committed to creating an environment where partnerships can flourish. Their ability to unite diverse groups around common goals will be critical to OCFA's continued success. The Fire Chief is not expected to have all the answers but will rely on collaboration, especially internally, to achieve the goals of the OCFA Board.

4. Exceptional Communicator

The ideal Fire Chief will be an exceptional communicator who can effectively engage a variety of audiences. They will be a skilled presenter who is comfortable addressing governing boards, the community, and the media alike. The successful candidate will proactively communicate with member agencies and stakeholders, ensuring they remain informed and engaged on issues affecting the organization. Strong listening skills, coupled with the ability to articulate a clear vision and direction, will be essential components of their leadership style.

5. People Development & Organizational Culture

The OCFA Board desires a Fire Chief who is deeply committed to the people of OCFA and the long-term health of the organization. The successful candidate will prioritize recruitment, retention, employee development, and succession planning to ensure OCFA remains a destination agency for top talent. Culture is key. They will demonstrate genuine care and concern for employees at all levels of the organization and actively foster a culture of trust. Building strong internal relationships and maintaining visibility throughout the agency will be important priorities. The ideal leader will invest in the next generation of leaders while creating an environment where employees feel empowered to succeed. OCFA employees should feel that their Fire Chief is approachable and is responsive to the needs of the team.





THE NEXT FIRE CHIEF'S FOCUS WILL BE:

Developing Future OCFA Leaders

OCFA's continued success depends on its ability to prepare the next generation of leaders. The next Fire Chief will champion leadership development at all levels by investing in mentorship, professional growth opportunities, and succession planning. They will cultivate a culture that encourages continuous learning and best practices, strengthening the leadership pipeline to ensure OCFA remains resilient.

Renewing the JPA Agreement

One of the most significant priorities will be supporting the successful renewal of the JPA agreement, due for renewal in 2030. This requires thoughtful collaboration with the OCFA Board, member agencies, elected officials, labor groups, and key stakeholders. Each member agency should feel the process is transparent and based on serving each community's unique needs. Trust and productive dialogue are critical.

Helping the OCFA Board Create a Clear Vision

The next Fire Chief will partner with the OCFA Board to define and articulate a clear vision for OCFA's future. As the fire service evolves, the organization needs a leader who can identify emerging opportunities and define strategic priorities. This shared direction will align organizational resources and meet stakeholder expectations, serving as the foundation for continued excellence.

Incorporating Technology

The OCFA Board seeks a forward-thinking leader who understands the transformative role that technology can play in enhancing service delivery. While valuing OCFA's proud traditions, the OCFA Board seeks a leader who will bring industry best practices and innovative approaches to ensure the organization remains at the forefront of fire protection and emergency response.





THE POSITION

Reporting to the OCFA Board of Directors, the Fire Chief is responsible for performing executive level activities, including planning, organizing, and directing the operation of OCFA. The Fire Chief receives policy direction and administrative oversight from the OCFA Board of Directors and exercises supervision over sworn and non-sworn Deputy and Assistant Fire Chiefs.



CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Confers with and directs the day-to-day activities of the OCFA through the Deputy and Assistant Fire Chiefs; directs their training and development and evaluates their performance.
- Actively communicates with the OCFA Board of Directors on OCFA activities that impacts member cities, unincorporated County areas, and OCFA.
- Establishes and maintains relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials and agencies that could impact OCFA, including, but not limited to funding opportunities and legislative impacts.
- Plans, implements, and directs all phases of the operations of the OCFA; formulates departmental operating policy in conformance with OCFA Board of Directors' policy and legislative mandate.
- Develops and recommends departmental goals and objectives and delegates authority and responsibility to meet the goals and objectives; evaluates and reports to the OCFA Board of Directors on the effectiveness and efficiency of departmental operations.
- Establishes and implements OCFA standard operating procedures and ensures compliance with Federal, State, and local laws.
- Reviews management staff recommendations for staff and equipment; recommends departmental budget priorities; presents and justifies program and budget recommendations to the OCFA Board of Directors.
- Coordinates with contiguous fire departments and develops mutual assistance programs where appropriate.
- Meets with citizen groups to discuss and explain the various OCFA all-risk injury prevention and life safety programs; promotes community support of OCFA programs.
- Evaluates community needs; recommends modification of departmental operations to meet new or changed needs.
- Works closely with the City Manager's Technical Advisory Committee, five standing committees of the OCFA Board of Directors, as well as special ad hoc committees as needed.





QUALIFICATIONS

KNOWLEDGE OF

- Contemporary leadership principles and practices applicable to a modern, decentralized, service-oriented organization.
- Management principles and practices necessary to plan, analyze, develop, direct, and evaluate regional programs, administrative policies, organizational structures, and the various OCFA all-risk injury and life safety practices.
- Principles and processes necessary to accomplish organizational change in a highly traditional and unionized work environment.
- Principles and modern methods of fire suppression/prevention.
- Administration principles and practices including organization, fiscal management, budgetary preparation and controls, program planning, implementation, and administration, local government funding regulations and processes.
- Federal and State laws, rules, and procedures governing fire suppression, prevention, and investigation.
- Principles of employee supervision and personnel management including labor relations, training, disciplining of personnel, and modern information systems.

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- Optimal candidates will have 10 or more years of progressively responsible leadership experience at the executive, division or department level.
- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Public Administration, Business Administration, or a related field (equivalent combinations of education and experience may be considered).
- Experience in labor relations, including negotiations, meet-and-confer processes, and grievance resolution.
- Participation in the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program and qualifications under NWCG guidelines in ICS Section Chief roles are preferred.
- Must possess or be able to obtain a valid California Class C (or higher) driver's license.





COMPENSATION & BENEFITS



Salary Range:

\$378,684 - \$425,000



Retirement:

Regular OCFA employees are members of the Orange County Employees Retirement System.



Benefits Package:

Comprehensive medical, dental, and vision coverage with generous OCFA contribution. Generous paid time off: Up to 200 hours of vacation (based on service), 13 paid holidays, plus up to 96 hours of separate sick leave, and 40 hours of Paid Annual Leave.



Professional Growth and Family Perks:

Tuition reimbursement up to \$2,000/year, medical and dependent care FSA, behavioral health and wellness services, pet healthcare program, and optional Benevolent Association.



This summary highlights key elements of OCFA's compensation and benefits package. A full list of requirements, benefits, and terms of employment is available in the official job specification and applicable labor agreements. Candidates are encouraged to review the complete details provided by the OCFA using the QR code.

For more information, please contact

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To apply, please email a cover letter and resume by July 17 to:

OCFA.FCrecruitment@jacobgreenandassociates.com



This is a confidential recruitment.

JGA conducts recruitments through a strict, candidate-protective confidential process. Candidate information is shared only with the appointing authority. All interviews occur offsite with logistics managed discreetly to ensure privacy and controlled exposure at every step. This approach reflects our firm's core philosophy: protecting candidate confidentiality to maintain trust and integrity throughout the search.

