



LAKELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lakeland Fire Department Welcomes Nine New Firefighters

Lakeland --- The Lakeland Fire Department (LFD) is pleased to announce the hiring of nine new firefighters that will begin duty on Monday, January 27, 2014. The new hires are filling vacancies from recent retirements of longtime LFD veterans and openings left as a result of internal promotions.

The hiring process was highly selective because of the large pool of applicants. Nearly 200 firefighters applied during the weeklong period that applications were being accepted. Another opportunity for firefighter hopefuls will be available later this year when the department will hire nine additional firefighters in anticipation of the department's new Fire Station # 7, currently under construction. The new station, near the Lakeland Linder Regional Airport, is expected to be completed by December 2014 and will provide both Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) services to the airport as well provide emergency services to residents and businesses in southwest Lakeland.

"The selection process was difficult because there were many qualified candidates to choose from. Our hiring committee is confident that it selected the best available candidates and it's comforting to know that the new rookies joining our ranks are highly skilled and qualified to continue providing the high quality emergency services our department is known for." said Training Chief John Almskog, coordinator of the hiring effort.

Of the nine new hires one is already a certified paramedic while the other eight are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's), although the eight will have the opportunity to pursue paramedic training once on the job.

The group of new hires is a young and diverse one, serving as a good representation of the community they will be serving in Lakeland. The new additions include a female firefighter, an African-American firefighter, and a Hispanic firefighter. Additionally, a majority of the new hires hail from central Florida and are graduates of area fire academies like the Ridge Career Center Fire Academy and Hillsborough Community College Fire Academy.

The nine new firefighters will help significantly reduce current overtime costs to maintain minimum staffing at all stations. The new hires now bring the department to a total of 161 personnel whom, last year alone, responded to nearly 20,000 calls and serve nearly 100,000 residents within the department's service area.

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Gary Ballard, Fire Chief

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