

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Employment Practice Exposure—Position Description

A detailed position description is the starting point of a thorough hiring/membership process. A position description informs the applicant of the essential functions of the position. The “essential functions” of the position are important since these are the functions that the employee/member must be able to perform to be considered a viable candidate for a position.

The following is an outline of a possible approach that can be used to create new descriptions or modify existing descriptions in your effort to comply with the position description aspects of the American Disabilities Act. The information contained in the sample position description is for general information purposes only. VFIS recommends your position description, whether sampled or developed, be reviewed by a local attorney.

Position Summary

Should answer the question “why does this position exist in the organization.” This should be a brief statement of the major components of the position, including:

- Essential position functions
- Purpose and objectives of these functions
- Key relationships

SAMPLE: POSITION SUMMARY

Protects lives and property through activities associated with fire prevention, fire suppression, hazardous materials and emergency medical incidents and participates in the training and maintenance activities necessary to achieve that end.

SAMPLE: ESSENTIAL POSITION FUNCTIONS

- RESPONDS promptly to fire alarms and other emergency calls to major incidents when notified while on duty.
- DRIVES fire apparatus and OPERATES pump and other equipment with firefighting, rescue, salvage and maintenance operations.
- ENTERS burning buildings and ADVANCES charged and uncharged hose lines and APPLIES extinguishing agents to fires.
- POSITIONS and CLIMBS ladders to gain access to upper floors for rescue.
- Effectively COMMUNICATES verbally by means of two-way radio as person-to-person and in writing through completion of various records, memos and letters.

Position Responsibilities

This should be a list of specific responsibilities that cover the various aspects of the position.

SAMPLE: POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

- PROVIDES emergency medical service to fire or accident victims and assists the local emergency medical service provider as necessary or when required.
- INSPECTS buildings for fire hazards and COMPLETES pre-fire plans as appropriate.

This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization's needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm, or damage to personnel, property, and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control Representative at (800) 233-1957.

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- MAINTAINS apparatus, equipment, buildings and grounds.
- PARTICIPATES in all phases of training necessary to acquire the knowledge and skills required of the position.
- ASSISTS Company Officer in maintaining records and submitting reports.
- SERVES as Acting Lieutenant when so designated.
- PERFORMS other duties as required.
- PROTECTS property from unnecessary smoke and water damage by using salvage covers, positive pressure ventilation fans and water vacuum.
- CLIMBS, CRAWLS and RUNS as necessary to accomplish fire extinguishment, rescue and personal safety.
- CARRIES or MOVES heavy equipment and/or objects necessary to achieve fire extinguishment or rescue.

Required Education/Experience

The education and experience required should:

- Reflect the level that would be established to recruit for the position.
- Be the same for everyone in that position.
- Be consistent with position's responsibilities
- Reflect what best fits the requirements of the position or what qualifications are necessary to advance to a higher position.

SAMPLE: REQUIRED EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE

- Requires a valid State Driver's License or a Class C State Driver's License.
- A general knowledge of a variety of subjects and skills related to firefighting, emergency medical service and hazardous material.

Required Skills

Skill needed should be listed on the position description. It may be also beneficial to include the frequency with which the skill is required.

Skill requirements can only be listed with the following caveats:

- The disabled employee has the right to request an accommodation.¹
- The organization has the obligation to provide an accommodation unless the accommodation would impose an "undue hardship" on the employer.¹

SAMPLE: REQUIRED SKILLS

- Ability to respond quickly uses good judgment under stress in hazardous situations, and the human relationships.
- Knowledge of street and hydrant locations.
- Knowledge of dispatch procedure.

Physical Requirements and Environmental Conditions

Document the physical capabilities required to perform the responsibilities (essential position functions) and the special environmental conditions that are inherent in the work area where the position functions are performed.

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SAMPLE: PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Must be able to lift and move ladder and climb ladder.
- Must have agility to climb through rafters, on roofs and crawl through tunnels.
- Must be able to open and close valves and be able to advance with hose discharging water.
- Must be able to carry heavy loads up and down stairs.
- Must be able to run and drag hose.
- Must be able to hear alarms and respond.
- Must be able to effectively communicate via two-way radio and over the telephone.
- Must be able to grasp and safely use hand tools such as axe, pike pole, chain saw, shovel, etc.

¹ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, § 12112, 104 Stat. 328 (1990). Retrieved February 22, 2017, from <https://adata.org/publication/ADA-faq-booklet#Employment>