



# GENERAL ORDER

## GENERAL ORDER 700.03

### Firefighter Recruit Task Book Course

#### BUREAU OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Issue Date: January 18, 2002

Revision Date: August 13, 2019

#### 1 APPLICABILITY

2 Career Uniformed Personnel

#### 3 POLICY

4 The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (Department) places great  
5 importance on the training and preparation of its responders. New career employees complete  
6 a rigorous Trainee Academy delivered by the Bureau of Education and Training (E&T). Upon  
7 successful completion of the Trainee Academy program, career Firefighter Trainee graduates  
8 advance to the rank of Firefighter Recruit (FFR) and are typically reassigned to the Emergency  
9 Services Bureau (ESB) where they remain at that rank pending the successful completion of the  
10 probationary period. The probationary period ensures FFRs accomplish the expected duties of  
11 a Firefighter and an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider safely and competently by  
12 imparting knowledge that will assist in their daily operations and fire service career. This policy  
13 outlines the career Firefighter Recruit Task Book (RTB) course and the associated testing  
14 process that must be successfully accomplished during the FFR's probationary period, including  
15 course structure with specific benchmarks.

#### 16 DEFINITIONS

- 17 ➤ **Recruit Task Book (RTB)** – A structured workbook located on the Virtual Academy (VA)  
18 that covers all areas important to Department personnel that all FFRs must complete  
19 within their probationary period.  
20
- 21 ➤ **Recruit Task Book Testing Process** - Comprises the Mid and Final Probationary Exams.  
22
- 23 ➤ **Recruit Task Book Student Chapter Survey (Survey)** - Survey used to gather information  
24 about the RTB chapter and assess its effectiveness in achieving the intended goals and  
25 outcomes and to help develop or modify goals and outcomes.  
26
- 27 ➤ **Recruit Task Book Chapter Completion Appraisal (Appraisal)** - An assessment of the  
28 FFR's ability to complete the RTB Chapter.  
29
- 30 ➤ **Recruit Task Book Chapter Completion Form** - A verification of the FFR's ability to  
31 complete the RTB Course Chapter by the established completion deadlines.



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- 32 ➤ **Recruit Task Book Benchmarks Completion Form** - A verification of the FFR's ability to  
33 complete the RTB Course by the established completion deadlines required to  
34 participate in the RTB testing process.

### 35 PROCEDURES

#### 36 RTB COURSE - VIRTUAL ACADEMY:

- 37 • With the increased use of technology in the fire service, the reliance on and practice  
38 with the Department's Virtual Academy (VA) in the early stages of a firefighter's career  
39 is vital. Therefore, the RTB shall be a course accessible in the VA, and the FFR must  
40 complete certain requirements using the VA.
- 41 • The VA shall provide the FFR with 24/7 access and a medium by which a FFR's chain of  
42 command can monitor progress.

#### 44 THE RECRUIT TASK BOOK COURSE:

- 45 • Successful completion of the RTB course is required for the rank of Firefighter per  
46 General Order 100.04: Position Requirements – Licenses, Certifications, Experience, and  
47 Education Prerequisites where it is referred to as the Department's Probationary  
48 Firefighter/EMS Recruit Manual course.
- 49 • The RTB course is designed to help the FFR obtain the highest level of achievement  
50 possible with the assistance of their company officer.
- 51 • Benefits of this course include:
- 52 ○ The FFR is provided a "road map" of the training expected of them during their  
53 probationary time.
  - 54 ○ Consistency in training topics for all FFRs.
  - 55 ○ Ability to track the FFR's training.
  - 56 ○ Company officers' ability to monitor a FFR's training to measure the expected  
57 performance and ability to perform specific tasks.
  - 58 ○ Keeps the company refreshed on the basic skills as they assist the FFR with the  
59 completion of the RTB course.
  - 60 ○ Determine efficient use of training time (reduces duplication).
- 61
- 62 • Except for the *Introduction to Station and Field Life* chapter, there is no required specific  
63 completion sequence for the chapters.
- 64 ○ Each officer should determine a logical order based on the needs of the shift and  
65 the company.
- 66
- 67 • Each chapter must be reviewed and signed off using the *RTB Chapter Completion Form*  
68 by the following:
- 69 ○ FFR's assigned Company Mentor.
  - 70 ○ FFR's Company Officer.
  - 71 ○ FFR's Company Captain.
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- The following are RTB Course benchmark completions:
    - Chapter – *Introduction to Station and Field Life*.
      - By End of the first month
    - Completion of chapter *Introduction to Station and Field Operations* and any other five chapters for a total of six chapters.
      - By End of Recruit Probation Week #20.
    - Completion of remaining 6 chapters
      - By End of Recruit Probation Week #44.
  - Benchmark completions must be reviewed and signed off using the RTB Benchmark Completion Forms by the following:
    - FFR’s assigned Company Mentor.
    - FFR’s Company Officer.
    - FFR’s Company Captain.
    - FFR’s Battalion Chief.
  - Each RTB Course contains the following forms:
    - Survey.
    - Appraisal.
    - Chapter Completion Form.
    - Benchmarks Completion Form.

All required corresponding forms must be submitted before the chapter will be considered complete and the FFR will be allowed to test.
  - The FFR is responsible for completing the Survey.
    - All answers are confidential. The collective responses will be the only information visible from each chapter.
  - The Company Officer is responsible for completing the Appraisal.
    - All Appraisals that indicate less than satisfactory performance must include a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), including supervisory documentation of the plan’s delivery to the recruit and when the RTB is forwarded to the respective Battalion Chief through the appropriate chain of command.

### RTB COURSE - MENTORING:

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- Working with an assigned Company Mentor can be an invaluable tool for success.
  - All FFRs shall be assigned a Company Mentor that shall serve as the FFR’s advisor and coach.
  - Each company that is assigned a FFR must identify a Company Mentor using the *Mentor Assignment Form* and forward the form to the respective Battalion Chief through the appropriate chain of command.
  - The role of the FFR Company Mentor is to:
    - Provide advice, guidance, and feedback.



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- 118 ○ Share their experience and expertise as appropriate.
- 119 ○ Act as a sounding board for ideas and action plans.
- 120 ○ Offer encouragement and support.
- 121 ○ Help the FFRs move out their comfort zones.
- 122 ○ Identify resources that will help the FFR with professional and personal
- 123 development and growth.
- 124 ○ Help consider and weigh potential consequences of decisions and actions to
- 125 avoid the pitfalls that may occur.
- 126

### RTB COURSE - TESTING:

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- 128 ● E&T, in collaboration with ESB, shall be responsible for developing, providing, and
- 129 scoring, and documenting all components of the RTB course and examinations.
- 130 ● At minimum, a mid-probationary written and a final probationary written and practical
- 131 exam shall be administered.
- 132 ● Each examination shall consist of a written test and the final shall also have one or more
- 133 practical tests.
- 134 ● The written component of the mid-probationary exam shall focus on topics taught
- 135 during the Trainee Academy.
- 136 ● The final probationary exam may include subjects or resources issued and addressed in
- 137 the RTB Course, as well as topics taught during the Trainee Academy.
- 138 ● The same exam shall be given to each recruit to ensure fairness and consistency of each
- 139 examination process. Each exam may have several options for practical skills stations.
- 140 ● A representative from ESB shall be present with E&T at all practical examinations.
- 141 ● After each RTB testing process, the Bureau Chief for E&T shall submit a written report to
- 142 the Bureau Chiefs of the ESB and the Administrative Services Bureau outlining the
- 143 results.
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### RTB COURSE - REQUIRED PERFORMANCE:

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- 146 ● Written Exam - A minimum of 70% on written exams must be achieved to successfully
- 147 complete the course.
- 148 ● Practical Exam - A minimum of 70% for each station or practical scenario exam must be
- 149 achieved to successfully complete the course. The passing score for each station or
- 150 scenario shall be defined by a performance check sheet outlining the specific grading
- 151 criteria for a given task or series of tasks.
- 152 ○ The performance check-sheets used in this process may originate from those
- 153 issued in the Trainee Academy texts, issued Trainee Academy handouts, or the
- 154 RTB (for the final RTB testing process).
- 155 ○ If performance check sheets used in this process cannot be found in the above
- 156 sources, it shall be ensured that FFRs have access to any performance
- 157 measurement check sheets that may be used in the process prior to the exam.
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- 159 ● The required number of RTB chapters, as outlined in the *Milestones* section below of
- 160 this order, shall be successfully completed to participate in RTB course exams.



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- 161 ○ A minimum of 2.5 points total must be achieved in each chapter for a successful
- 162 completion.
- 163 ○ Any additional period needed to successfully complete the required chapters
- 164 may entail an extension of probation.
- 165
- 166 ● Unsuccessful attempt by the FFR to meet minimum performance standards on any of
- 167 the exams and Appraisal components shall result in formal counseling by their direct
- 168 supervisor with a written record placed in the performance management system for the
- 169 employee.
- 170 ● The outcomes and supporting documentation, along with a PIP addressing the noted
- 171 deficiencies (may include the extension of probation), shall be developed and submitted
- 172 to the E&T and ESB Bureau Chiefs for review.
- 173 ○ The PIP shall be presented to the FFR within three days following the
- 174 unsuccessful completion of the assessment, and nine days following the
- 175 unsuccessful completion of the exam.
- 176 ○ Following the completion of a PIP, the FFR shall be required to successfully
- 177 complete the portion(s) of the exam where minimum performance standards
- 178 were not originally met.
- 179 ○ Failure to satisfactorily complete the PIP and demonstrate the minimum
- 180 performance standards during this re-test may result in extension of probation,
- 181 disciplinary action, and/or dismissal from employment.
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- 183 ● Overall Course Grade – The RTB chapters and the exams will each comprise 50% of the
- 184 overall probationary grade.
- 185

### 186 RTB COURSE - MILESTONES:

- 187 ● *Introduction to Station and Field Life*
- 188 ○ Shall be completed by the end of the first month.
- 189
- 190 ● Week 20
- 191 ○ Any five chapters, in addition to the *Introduction to Station and Field Life*, shall
- 192 be completed by the end of post-graduation week number 20.
- 193
- 194 ● Week 22
- 195 ○ A mid-probationary written exam shall be administered by the end of post-
- 196 graduation week number 22.
- 197 ○ Recruits who have not completed a total of six chapters, to include *Introduction*
- 198 *to Station and Field Life* of the RTB, shall not be allowed to participate in the
- 199 exam, which may result in an extension of probation, disciplinary action, and/or
- 200 dismissal from employment.
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- 202 ● Week 44
- 203 ○ The six remaining chapters shall be completed by the end of post-graduation
- 204 week number 44.



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- 205
- Week 48
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- A final probationary written and practical exam shall be administered by the end
- 207
- of post-graduation week number 48.
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- FFR's who have not completed all chapters of the RTB shall not be allowed to
- 209
- participate in the exam, which may result in an extension of probation,
- 210
- disciplinary action, and/or dismissal from employment.

### 211 REFERENCES

- 212
- None

### 213 SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES

- 214
- Title has been updated from Firefighter Recruit Probationary Year Evaluation to one that is
- 215
- inclusive of all the probationary training requirements.
- 216
- Inclusion of the Recruit Task Book outline.
- 217
- Inclusion of a Mentor program.
- 218
- Summary of Milestones.
- 219
- Updates to the Required Performance that include the Recruit Task Book Course Requirements.
- 220
- Document reorganization to correlate with the appropriate outline.

### 221 FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

- 222
- None

### 223 APPROVED

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228 Christine Uhlhorn, Fire EMS Chief

229 Office of the Fire Chief

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231 Author:

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