

# Inviting Applications for Fire Chief



Valdosta, Georgia

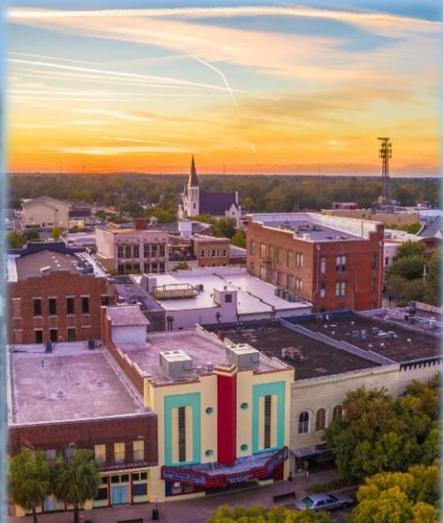
# About the Community

The City of Valdosta is a unique community, blending its historic past with a dynamic and high growth environment, coupled with a diversity to give it economic viability and strength. In 1860, Valdosta was incorporated as the new county government seat. With a population of 166 people, Valdosta thrived as the county government seat of Lowndes County and the inland capital for Sea Island cotton.

During the city's first 10 years, it grew 622 percent to a population of 1,999. Valdosta has seen explosive growth in the most recent decade and is now approaching a population of 60,000. The determination of the little town that moved to the railroad is still evident in today's city as it works toward a prosperous future. Valdosta provides a healthy, vibrant, safe environment where residents live, work, and play in a diverse community that values families and neighbors. Valdosta-Lowndes County is a thriving community with an economy balanced for growth, where wages are increasing at a healthy pace yet cost of living and business costs remain competitively low. Valdosta residents enjoy the scenic rural area of south Georgia along with a variety of urban shopping choices, dining, arts, and entertainment. Valdosta serves as the cultural, medical, and commercial hub for eleven south Georgia and north Florida counties.

## About the Government

The City of Valdosta operates under a Council/Manager form of Government. The Valdosta City Council is comprised of a mayor and seven council members who serve four year terms. The Council appoints the City Manager who is responsible for the daily operational functions of the city. The Mayor/Council is charged with setting policy, approving budgets, and other legislative duties such as adoption of ordinances. The Fire Chief is an important part of the management team and reports to the City Manager.



# Ideal Candidate

The new Fire Chief will be a dedicated and ethical team player who can quickly gain the confidence of staff, the community, and business owners. The new Chief will be an effective communicator and trusted organizational partner. The ability to communicate effectively with Mayor and Council, work collaboratively with the City Manager, and provide consistent direction to department staff is essential. Trust will be built through transparency, professionalism, and alignment between what is communicated and what is executed.

The ideal candidate will bring a robust background of fire service leadership and public safety, with a demonstrated ability to guide a diverse team in delivering exceptional emergency response and fire prevention programs. The successful candidate must have the ability to demonstrate a culture of leadership and accountability that starts at the top.

The Chief will be responsible for leading response efforts during emergencies, providing clear and decisive leadership in high-pressure situations. Strong problem-solving skills and the ability to make quick, informed decisions are essential.

The ideal candidate must be skilled at building and maintaining strong working relationships with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as clear communication with the public, city, and county officials. Additionally, the Chief will act as the primary spokesperson for the department, keeping the community informed and encouraging engagement with the department.



**106 positions**



**ISO 1 rating since 2016**

## 4047 Calls in 2025 - Breakdown:

Structure Fires:	104
Medical:	1455
Vehicle Acc.:	707
Service Calls:	205
Fire Alarms:	1227
Other Fires:	229
Other Hazards:	813

# Challenges and Opportunities

The Valdosta Fire Department is entering its next phase of growth from a position of strength, with multiple initiatives already underway. The Department's primary challenge—and opportunity—will be sustaining momentum while managing rapid growth, increasing service demands, and expanding regional responsibilities. The Fire Chief will be expected to build upon and advance an established leadership culture that values transparency, decisive action, and accountability. Continued emphasis will be placed on maintaining open communication within the department and with the public; setting and executing clear priorities; engaging personnel at all levels on operational issues; and ensuring consistent delivery of high-quality services to the citizens of Valdosta. Other challenges and opportunities include:

- Recruitment, retention, and workforce development will remain central priorities as the Department continues to grow. Ongoing efforts focus on strengthening an already professional workforce that reflects the demographics of the community while expanding succession planning and leadership readiness to ensure the Department is prepared for future operational and executive demands.
- Approximately 31% of the Fire Department's service calls involve first-response medical assistance. Strong support for prehospital patient care will continue through established partnerships with South Georgia Medical Center EMS. Priorities include expanding communication between field personnel, reinforcing consistent use of evidence-based trauma care, and enhancing joint training opportunities to support both operational effectiveness and regional coordination.
- Rapid community growth has accelerated the Department's capital planning needs. While construction of Fire Station #8 is still in progress, planning for Fire Station #9 is necessary to meet service demands. The Department will continue execution of its capital improvement program supported through SPLOST & other funding sources, including station upgrades, development of a dedicated training facility, and exploration of joint service fire stations with Lowndes County.
- The Valdosta Fire Department serves an important regional role as a recognized training resource and functions as a regional training center for the Georgia Fire Academy, providing instruction for both internal recruits and neighboring jurisdictions, and is licensed by the State Office of EMS as an EMS training site. These capabilities present significant opportunities to expand regional impact, partnerships, and service capacity.
- While the Department has strong access to external training and professional education resources, a key opportunity exists to further strengthen internal leadership development. Continued growth, along with anticipated retirements among long-tenured personnel, has increased the need for a more clearly defined internal leadership development and succession pathways.
- Ensuring continuity of essential services during emergencies remains a core operational priority. The Department will continue to maintain and exercise its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) through coordinated planning and joint training with partner agencies. These efforts support the City's preparedness for major weather events, mass casualty incidents, infrastructure disruptions, and complex regional emergencies.

# About the Position

## Essential Functions include, but are not limited to:

- Provides executive leadership and strategic direction for all functions of the Fire Department, establishing a clear vision, mission, and performance expectations aligned with the City's goals, community risk profile, and best practices in the modern fire service.
- Leads the development and implementation of short- and long-range strategic plans, including succession planning, workforce development, capital planning, and service delivery models to ensure organizational sustainability, operational readiness, and continuous improvement.
- Establishes and maintains a culture of accountability, professionalism, safety, and ethical leadership, setting clear expectations for command staff and holding all levels of the organization responsible for performance, conduct, and results.
- Oversees and evaluates departmental operations and outcomes using data-driven performance measures, ensuring efficient deployment of resources, adherence to standards, and alignment with community needs.
- Develops, administers, and oversees the department's operating and capital budgets; and establishes fiscal priorities.
- Actively establishes, maintains, and expands strategic partnerships with public safety agencies, regional and state partners, and community organizations to support coordinated response, shared resources, and community risk reduction efforts.
- Provides leadership during emergency incidents and disaster responses, ensuring effective incident command, interagency coordination, and post-incident evaluation to improve future preparedness and response.
- Maintains professional knowledge through participation in executive-level training, conferences, and professional organizations to remain current on emerging trends, innovations, and regulatory changes impacting the fire service.

## Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Fire Science, Public Administration, Emergency Management, Business Administration, or a related field is required. Master's degree is preferred.
- Completion of advanced fire service leadership, command, and management training through state-certified programs, national fire service organizations, or comparable professional development pathways is expected. Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE); National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program; upper-level NIMS training are highly desired.
- Minimum of five (5) years of executive experience in a command-level or senior leadership role in a fire department with similar complexities to the Valdosta department is expected. Any equivalent combination of education, training and experience that meet the requirements of the job will be considered.
- Must possess or be able to acquire a valid Georgia driver's license within 3 months of employment.

# Compensation & How to Apply



## Compensation and Benefits

The expected starting salary range for this position DOQ (depending on qualifications) is **\$125,000 - \$140,000** with a very comprehensive benefits package:

- Health, dental and vision insurance
- No cost Medical Clinic – Premise Health
- Basic Life and AD&D – provided by the city at no cost
- Long-term disability paid by the city
- Employee Assistance Program - EAP
- Pension benefit – employee contributes 3%, vested in 10 years
- Deferred Compensation 457 offered through Empower
- Paid time off (PTO) and paid holidays

Interested candidates must submit by email a cover letter, resume, a list of at least five job related references (with email and phone numbers), as well as salary history no later than February 13, 2026 to lisaward912@gmail.com

Please direct any questions to Lisa Ward, Senior Associate, Mercer Group Associates, at [lisaward912@gmail.com](mailto:lisaward912@gmail.com) 706-983-9326; or Alan Reddish at 706-614-4961.

