



CITY OF
TRAVERSE CITY



FIRE CHIEF

CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN



City of Traverse City
FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fire Chief

LEAD | INNOVATE | PROTECT

The City of Traverse City is seeking a forward-thinking, transformational leader to serve as its next Fire Chief. This is a rare opportunity to lead a growing, highly-respected, progressive fire department and make a lasting impact on public safety, emergency services, and the future of our community.

Traverse City is actively investing in public safety infrastructure and service delivery, including the implementation of Primary Emergency Transportation. City leadership values collaboration, innovation, data-informed decision-making, and continuous improvement, offering the Fire Chief a supportive environment to lead strategically and implement meaningful change. The Fire Chief is a key executive leader responsible for overseeing all fire department operations, including fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), ALS ambulance operations, hazardous materials response, fire prevention, public education, and training.

The Fire Chief reports to and receives administrative direction from the City Manager. As a member of the City Leadership Team, the Fire Chief plays a vital role in shaping citywide strategy, advancing public safety initiatives, and implementing Primary Emergency Transportation services.

As Fire Chief, you will provide strategic vision and operational leadership while fostering a culture centered on community priorities, safety, preparedness, accountability and professionalism. You will guide and inspire a dedicated team of fire and EMS professionals in a fast-paced and evolving environment.

This position requires a proven change agent with strong leadership skills, operational expertise, and the ability to navigate the complexities of municipal government and labor relations.

Why Traverse City

WE SERVE | COMMUNITY ORIENTED | SERVICE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD



Traverse City, Michigan offers an exceptional opportunity for an experienced fire service executive seeking both professional impact and quality of life. Situated along the shores of Grand Traverse Bay on Lake Michigan, Traverse City serves as the regional hub of Northern Michigan while maintaining a strong small-city identity.

The City has a year-round population of approximately 16,000, with extraordinary seasonal population fluctuation that create a complex and dynamic emergency services environment. This blend of municipal operations and destination-community demands provides a compelling leadership opportunity for a Fire Chief ready to guide a department through growth, enhanced-modernization, and service expansion.

GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The City operates under a collaborative governance model, with strong engagement among elected officials, executive leadership, labor partners, and the community. The Fire Chief serves as a key member of the City Leadership Team, contributing to organization-wide initiatives and long-term planning efforts.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Traverse City is widely recognized for its outstanding quality of life, featuring:

- Four-season outdoor recreation
- A vibrant downtown and waterfront
- Strong schools, healthcare, and community services
- An engaged and supportive community

This position offers a rare opportunity to lead a respected fire department while living in a community that values service, leadership, and balance.



230

**CITY
EMPLOYEES**



16,000

**CITY
RESIDENTS**



34

**CITY
PARKS**



6 M

**VISITORS
ANNUALLY**

The Ideal Candidate

The City of Traverse City is seeking a values-driven, emotionally intelligent Fire Chief who leads with clarity, accountability, and trust. The ideal candidate is a proven executive-level fire service leader capable of guiding the department through growth, modernization, and the implementation of EMS transport services, while aligning departmental priorities with the City's broader strategic goals. This leader is relatable, transparent, and decisive, with the discipline to make difficult but necessary decisions and follow through with accountability.

The successful candidate demonstrates a strong commitment to professional development, with a strategic approach to investing in training, leadership development, and workforce readiness. They communicate openly, clearly, and confidently, even in complex or high-stakes situations, and inspire trust and engagement across all levels of the organization. This leader cultivates a high-accountability culture through clear expectations, consistent follow-through, policy enforcement, and supportive course correction, while exhibiting sound judgment, empathy, and emotional intelligence under pressure.

The ideal Fire Chief thinks strategically, leading the department in alignment with the City's strategic priorities and organizational objectives, and is deeply committed to employee wellness and mental health. Experience leading or operating ALS transport services is highly valued, as Traverse City is at a pivotal moment in expanding emergency medical services. This leader fosters a feedback-rich culture grounded in trust, psychological safety, shared decision-making, and active listening, and supports strong succession planning within the department.

Senior leadership experience in a community with dynamics similar to Traverse City, such as seasonal population fluctuations, urban core response demands, tourism-related complexity, and EMS operations, is preferred, as is experience as a Fire Chief or in a key executive leadership role. The successful candidate values both the Traverse City Fire Department and the broader City organization and is actively engaged in the community it serves.



FIRE DEPARTMENT FACTS

- 1 - Fire Chief
- 3 - Suppression Captains
- 3 - Suppression Lieutenants
- 24 - Suppression Firefighter/Paramedics/EMTs
- 1 - Fire Marshal
- 1 - Training Officer
- 1 - Fire Inspector
- 1 - EMS Administrator
- 1 - Fire Department Office Administrator
- 4100 Calls annually



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide strategic leadership and direction for all fire and EMS operations
- Oversee fire suppression, EMS services, administration services, fire prevention, inspections, investigations, and public education
- Lead incident management and respond to major emergencies, including outside normal business hours
- Develop, implement, and enforce departmental policies, procedures, and safety programs
- Manage departmental budgeting, resource allocation, and long-range operational planning
- Supervise and nurture all departmental staff and oversee recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and professional development
- Collaborate with the City Manager and Human Resources on labor negotiations, personnel administration, and employee relations
- Oversee the Fire Inspector and Fire Marshal activities
- Maintain and improve ISO ratings for residential and commercial properties

LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATION

- Plan, organize, and direct all Fire Department activities in accordance with policies established by the City Manager in collaboration with the Fire Chief.
- Develop and administer programs related to:
 - Fire prevention and suppression
 - Emergency operations and non-emergency services
 - Labor relations and personnel management
 - Public safety education and community risk reduction
 - Regional Response Capabilities and Mutual Aid Coordination
- Prepare, present, and administer the annual Fire Department budget
- Direct the specification and acquisition of apparatus, equipment, and facilities
- Establish long-range plans for training, staffing, facilities, and equipment needs
- Ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and best practices

Qualifications

EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

- Bachelor's degree in Fire Science, Business Administration, Public Administration, Emergency Management, or a closely related field
 - *Master's degree preferred*
- Ten (10) years of fire service experience as a fire officer, including:
 - Five (5) years as a command officer in a similarly sized department
- Minimum of two (2) years as a department head
- Three (3) or more years of experience in labor relations and personnel administration
- Additional post-bachelor training in fire science, investigation, or management preferred

An equivalent combination of education, training, and experience that provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities may be considered.

LICENSING AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Candidates must possess or obtain the following certifications and licenses. Out-of-state candidates are encouraged to apply; however, all required Michigan certifications must be obtained through reciprocity or equivalent processes prior to final appointment, as applicable under State of Michigan requirements.

REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS & CREDENTIALS

- Michigan Firefighter I and II
- Michigan Company Officer I and II Series Designation Certification or Michigan Fire Officer I and II Certification
- Michigan Fire Instructor I Certification
- Incident Safety Officer Certification
- Fire Officer III Certification
- Blue Card Incident Command – 3-Day Certification Lab
- Valid Michigan Driver's License



RESIDENCY & AVAILABILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Must reside and maintain a principal domicile within 30 miles of the nearest City of Traverse City boundary within twelve (12) months of hire
- Must be able to respond to emergencies outside normal business hours
- Must be willing and available to attend evening meetings, such as City Commission and community meetings





KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, & ABILITIES

- Extensive knowledge of modern firefighting methods, equipment, and emergency management
- Strong understanding of fire administration, municipal operations, and public safety systems
- Ability to lead personnel and equipment effectively under emergency conditions
- Proven ability to analyze complex problems and develop effective policies and procedures
- Excellent communication skills, including public speaking and media relations
- Ability to build strong working relationships with City officials, employees, labor groups, partner agencies, and the public

WORK CONDITIONS & PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Work is performed in office, vehicle, and outdoor environments in all weather conditions
- Frequent exposure to emergency and high-stress situations
- Must be physically capable of performing firefighting field operations, including:
 - Wearing protective gear
 - Carrying equipment for up to 60 pounds
 - Responding to emergency scenes at all hours
- Noise levels range from quiet office settings to loud emergency environments

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITMENT

The City is committed to setting the next Fire Chief up for long-term success. To support this goal, the City will implement a structured 360-style review and support process, including:

- A 3-month, 6-month, and 1-year comprehensive review
- Regular check-ins involving the Fire Chief and City Manager
- Ongoing dialogue focused on alignment, leadership development, and organizational success

This intentional onboarding and feedback process reflects the City's commitment to transparency, accountability, and sustained leadership effectiveness.

Compensation & Benefits

The City of Traverse City offers a competitive executive compensation and benefits package, designed to attract highly qualified candidates on a national level.

Salary Range: \$115,540 – \$152,145, commensurate with qualifications and experience

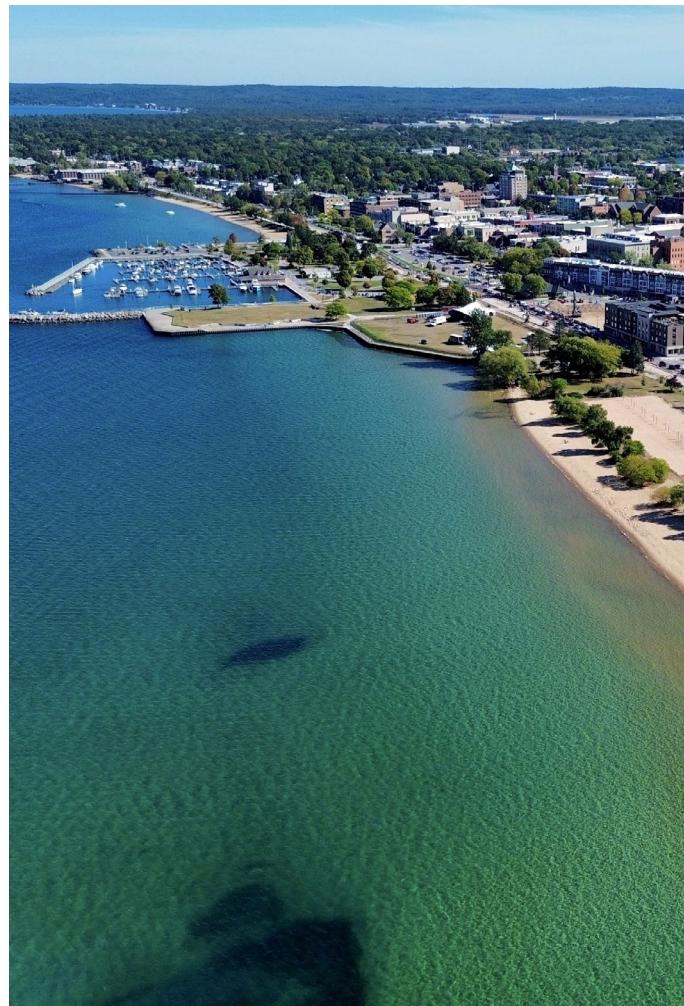
COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS PACKAGES

- Comprehensive benefits package, including health, dental, vision, MERS Retirement Pension, and paid leave, 457(b) with generous employer match, and retirement health care savings plan
- Relocation assistance available for out-of-area and national candidates, as applicable
- Potential temporary housing stipend, as applicable
- Executive leadership support and onboarding

The Application Process

To be considered, candidates must submit through mail or email their resume with references, cover letter, and salary requirements. Position is open until filled but resumes will be reviewed as they are received.

Final candidates will be subject to a comprehensive background investigation, including criminal history, drug screening, medical evaluation, and psychological assessment.



MAILING ADDRESS

City of Traverse City
Human Resources Office
400 Boardman Avenue
Traverse City, MI 49684

EMAIL

jobs@traversecitymi.gov

The City of Traverse City is an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer. Employment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, national origin, genetic information, or any other protected status.