



P.O. WILLIAMS
CHIEF

CITY OF ATLANTA

DEPARTMENT of FIRE

46 COURTLAND ST., S. E.

Atlanta, Georgia

August 15, 1969

Honorable Ivan Allen, Jr.
Mayor, City of Atlanta
City Hall
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mayor Allen:

We have been dealing with Community Relations and have accepted some of their suggestions relative to eliminating some problems. Various policies and facts pertaining to this department are attached.

It is interesting to note the following excerpt from the Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights 1969, entitled For All the People...By All the People which has just reached this office:

"Despite the belated admission of firemen into the Atlanta department and the elaborate procedures which surrounded their introduction, the Atlanta Fire Department had a larger proportion of Negroes in uniform than any other central city in the survey and a higher degree of integration than many."

We are in the process of re-writing the Rules and Regulations of the Atlanta Fire Department to eliminate any inequities in the old book, to eliminate any possibility of discrimination or the possibility of any officer over-reacting with authority. As soon as this has been completed, it will be presented to the Board of Fire Masters for their approval and adoption.

We would like to stress that any fireman who has grievances, has three methods by which to air them in this office: by completing a Form 52 (Special Request), go through the Company Officers and Battalion Chief, or by use of a Suggestion Form available in all stations. Any justifiable grievances will be straightened out.

Yours very truly,

P. O. Williams
P. O. WILLIAMS, Chief
Atlanta Fire Department

POW:11a

Enclosure

cc: Mr. W. T. Knight, Chairman Board of Fire Masters
"HELP SAVE LIFE AND PROPERTY BY PREVENTING FIRES"

The Atlanta Fire Department's only interest is in the protection of lives and property from fire. The citizens of Atlanta should have and deserve the best fire protection available. In order to accomplish this, we must have the best trained, qualified, and experienced personnel in responsible positions regardless of race, creed, or color.

Fire Department officership must have leadership. One cannot gain leadership if standards have to be lowered so one can qualify. Subordinates will not look upon such an officer as a leader. Life and property is at stake. Decisions and actions of a fire officer are based on knowledge and experience of the job. Therefore, standards and qualifications must be kept high. Rather than lower the standards, they should be raised.

PROMOTIONAL POLICIES:

Promotions in the Fire Department are made according to merit and fitness.

The promotional system of the Atlanta Fire Department is set by law. Anyone meeting the qualifying standards as set forth by the Promotional Board will be promoted regardless of race, creed, or color. We will not and do not discriminate for or against anyone meeting the qualifying standards of this system.

Promotional examinations for Fire Lieutenants are held every two years. To qualify, a man must have had five years service in the Fire Department. After the examination, the applicants are listed according to their scores from a combination of the written test, training school average, and seniority points. This list is divided into groups of 20. The first 20 men are rated at oral interviews, and this score is added to their grades from the above three items. Promotions from this list are made in order of the applicant's final score.

So far, the first 7 men have been promoted from the Lieutenant's examination held in March of 1969. The first black firemen started to work in April 1963, so that this is the first year (1969) any of them have been eligible to apply for promotion to Lieutenant. There were 153 applicants, of whom 6 were black. The first black applicant is in the 6th group of 20 or approximately position 102 on the list.

Promotions to Fire Apparatus Operator are made by appointment. The Captain at each station makes these selections subject to the approval of the Battalion Chief. The men must have had at least two years service with the Fire Department and have passed the required driving tests at the Training School. There are nine black firemen in these positions.

HIRING PRACTICES:

Eligible lists for Firemen are established every week after the weekly interviews. (During March, April, and July of this year, interviews were held every two weeks.) As vacancies occur, the Fire Department calls the men on a list in the order of their scores. Each person on the list of a certain date is contacted and offered employment before moving to the next chronological list. Once a man is on the eligible list, he is not by-passed unless the Fire Department is unable to contact him by telephone or letter.

Through July 25, of this year, 60 white men were put on the eligible list and 57 black men. Of these, 45 white men have been employed and 41 black men.

Of the 867 men in the extinguishing division, over 19% or 165 are black. Nine of these are Fire Apparatus Operators and 25 are on Military Leave. Firemen that leave the department for military service are reinstated when they return (this is a Federal Law) and are usually returned to the same station from which they left.

RECREATION CLUB:

In January of 1959, a group of firemen leased a 5.7 acre tract of land at Lake Allatoona from the government and organized a club which was called Atlanta Firemen's Recreation Club. However, the Fire Department nor the City of Atlanta has any jurisdiction over the activities of this club. It is a private organization controlled by a Board of Trustees composed of eleven men, who adhere to the wishes of the majority of the members, and is supported entirely by dues paid by the members and maintained through volunteer services of the members.