



# Welcome to the St Lucie County Fire District

Fire Chief Position Available - Apply by December 8, 2017



Located on Florida's famed Treasure Coast, St. Lucie County is an exciting, picturesque place brimming with opportunity. It is a microcosm of Florida—the old and the new; urban and rural; densely populated, master-planned communities and large agricultural ranches. All are found within its borders. With the effects of the 2007-2008 real estate market collapse finally wearing off, population growth has resumed and is accelerating. With perpetually gorgeous weather, it is the ideal location for new residents and outdoorsy, sun-loving adventurers.

Geographically, the County is located within easy driving distance of several major population centers. It sits just 60 miles north of West Palm Beach, 90 miles north of Ft. Lauderdale, 120 miles north of Miami, 120 miles southeast of Orlando and 150 miles east of Tampa. Despite this proximity, St. Lucie County



maintains the peaceful, relaxed atmosphere of less populous areas. The total population of the County is just under 300,000 and more than 16 million people live within a 150-mile radius. The result is a unique fusion of open space and urbanization.

St. Lucie County has its own general aviation airport in Fort Pierce, Treasure Coast International Airport and Business Park, and is within easy reach of the commercial airports at Orlando, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Melbourne. Vacationers appreciate the fact that they can easily debark with most major cruise lines at Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Port Canaveral. Furthermore, the County was the original home of the Navy SEALs and the National Navy UDT-SEAL museum is in the unincorporated county just north of Fort Pierce, the County's second-largest city.

The St. Lucie County area has a great deal to offer in terms of sporting attractions. The home courts for the Miami Heat and Orlando Magic are each a short 2-hour drive away. For the football fans, the Dolphins, Buccaneers, and Jaguars all play nearby. Baseball enthusiasts enjoy proximity to the Tampa Bay Rays, the Miami Marlins, and the New York Mets single A team, the St. Lucie Mets. The Mets also have their spring training facility in Port St. Lucie at the County-owned facility, First Data Field.

The County is home to a wide variety of cultural events such as the weekly Fort Pierce Jazz & Blues Craft Market as well as performances by the Atlantic Classical Orchestra and the Preston Contemporary Dance Theatre. The Sunrise Theater in Fort Pierce hosts numerous popular entertainers. Countless other concerts, festivals, and events are frequently held in the nearby metropolises.

For those who enjoy the outdoors, the ocean and lagoon offer numerous opportunities for



fishing, boating, jet skis, kayaking and so on. The western county offers hunting. For the amateur athlete, young or old, the County and its cities offer a wide variety of programs. In addition to the County's many golf courses, the PGA Village is located in St. Lucie West and features the one-of-kind PGA Learning Center and History Museum in addition to public courses.

St. Lucie County is home to a friendly, welcoming community where residents know their neighbors and care for one another. The County is relatively safe and home to the safest large city in Florida. Medical care is excellent and the County boasts over 450 physicians and three hospitals. There are many housing options available, with properties ranging from the affordable to the luxurious.

Students can get a very good education in St. Lucie County. It offers a variety of public, charter, and private schools to meet any family's needs. Student-to-teacher ratios are relatively low – around 19:1 for both elementary and secondary public schools. There are approximately 30 primary schools (serving K-8), six high schools, and a number of career academies. Further, Indian River State College, a four year institution, is headquartered in Fort Pierce and is an Aspen Award Finalist with Distinction; that is, it was recognized as one of the top three community colleges in the nation. The school offers Associates Degrees as well as nine bachelor's degree programs in the areas of teacher education, nursing, organizational management, public safety administration and healthcare management. Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute is also located in Fort Pierce.

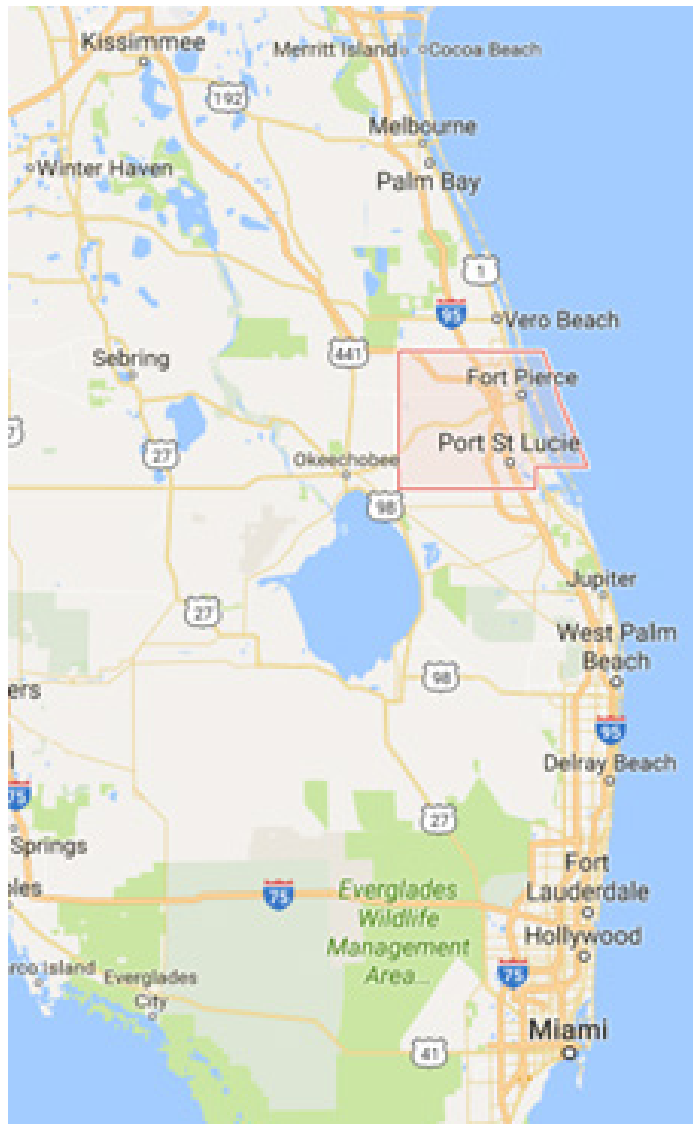
## HISTORY

Originally founded by Spanish colonists, the Treasure Coast got its name when the fabled 1715 Treasure Fleet was destroyed by a hurricane in nearby waters. Originally part of Brevard County, the area known today as St. Lucie County expanded throughout the late 1800s until its official designation in 1905. In 1906, the Ft. Pierce Fire Department was formed.

The County experienced an enormous influx of residents at the conclusion of World War II, especially by former naval

officers who had trained in the area. In 1955, in recognition of its expanded role, the Florida Legislature created the Fort Pierce-St. Lucie County Fire District. In one sense, it was an expansion of the Ft. Pierce Fire District. In 1959, the name was changed to the St. Lucie County-Fort Pierce Fire Prevention and Control District.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, it became clear that St. Lucie County was ripe for growth. General Development Corporation (GDC) began to develop tens of thousands of acres, laying the foundation for the future city of Port St. Lucie. At the time GDC viewed its primary target audience as retirees. Growth was explosive – the County’s population increased from 39,294 in 1960 to 150,171 in 1990. The new residents though were a mix of older and younger. In 1972, the Fire District began to provide EMS care and transport. The St. Lucie West development followed and





then Tradition, an expansive master-planned community patterned after urban life in middle 20th Century America.

In 1996, the current name of the St. Lucie County Fire District was adopted. The County’s growth has continued. In 2000, its population was 192,696 and in 2010 it was 277,789. The 2015 estimate was 298,563 or 7.5% over 2010 in spite of the Great Recession. The current version of the Fire District’s charter was adopted by the Florida Legislature in 2004 and amended in 2015.

GEOGRAPHY

St. Lucie County is located on the Atlantic Ocean in South Central Florida. See Figure 1 on page 3. It covers 688 square miles (572 of land and 116 of water which includes the environmentally sensitive Indian River Lagoon). Most of the County is flat and separated from the open ocean

by sandbars and barrier islands. These natural formations make the Treasure Coast a gallery of lagoons, rivers, and bays.

The County's elevation is less than 20 feet above sea level. It has two significant population centers: Port St. Lucie (population 185,132) and Fort Pierce (45,295) meaning the vast majority of the land is flat, undeveloped and agricultural.

CLIMATE

St. Lucie County is generally classified as a warm, humid, subtropical climate, with hot summers and mild winters. Only on rare occasions does the temperature surpass 100 degrees Fahrenheit or drop below freezing. Average yearly precipitation ranges between 50-55 inches.

The area experiences Category I-III hurricanes from time to time. Unlike points further south in Florida, more severe storms have not been documented in the area since 1899. The County owns and operates a state-of-the art 27,250 Emergency Operations Center.

DEMOGRAPHICS

See Table 1 for St. Lucie County Demographics

COMMERCE

While St. Lucie County has a strong level of economic development in some areas, it offers a wealth of untapped potential. It has a small port and airport, much of the surrounding acreage at the latter is undeveloped. The County has excellent access to rail, I-95 and the Florida Turnpike. Between these assets and the sizeable neighboring populations, the potential for private and commercial expansion is high. A list of the County’s current top 10 employers is included in Table 2 on page 5.

The County’s general aviation airport covers 3,600 acres. That presents many opportunities for future commercial growth and development. Another opportunity revolves around research enterprises. The County operates Treasure Coast Research Park (covering 1,650 acres) with recently

Table 1: St. Lucie County Demographics

2016 Estimated Population: 306,507			
Distribution by Race		Distribution by Age	
Caucasian	73.2%	0 to 15	17.4%
African American	19.3%	15 to 25	11.5%
Asian	1.8%	25 to 45	22.5%
Other	5.7%	45 to 65	22.6%
Total	100%	65 to 85	19.1%
		Over 85	2.8%

Other Statistics		Median Age	
Hispanic (all races)	3.2%	St. Lucie County	40.2
Poverty Rate	17.3%	U.S.	37.4

Educational Achievement (over age 25)	
High School or Higher	78.2%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	4.7%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 2: Principal Employers, St. Lucie County, FL

Employer	Industry	Employees
St. Lucie County School Board	Education	5,416
Walmart Retail and Distribution	Retail	2,253
HCA/Lawnwood & St. Lucie Medical Center	Medical	2,189
St Lucie County Government	Government	1,624
Indian River State College	Education	1,599
Publix	Retail	1,466
City of Port St. Lucie	Government	1,086
Convey Health Solutions	Health Care	950
Martin Health System	Medical	850

Source: St. Lucie County 2015 CAFR

installed infrastructure. It would like to build on that base and continue to develop this research cluster.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

St. Lucie County has three incorporated cities: Fort Pierce (population 42,600), Port St. Lucie (population 168,700) and St. Lucie Village (population 599). Most of the County's land mass falls in the unincorporated area and is served by the County and the Fire District.

## THE DISTRICT

The St. Lucie County Fire District is an independent special district under Section 191 of the Florida Statutes. Its goal is to efficiently deliver Fire/EMS services throughout the County and eliminate the need and cost for managing multiple agencies. The Fire District is the largest fire/EMS provider on the Treasure Coast and the fifth largest in the State of Florida. It operates 17 fire stations, and presently has an ISO Rating of 3. In FY 2015, it fielded 43,271 medical calls and 4,751 fire calls. As a result of these calls, 31,245 transports were done by ground and 406 by air.

The Fire District is governed by a seven-member Fire Board, comprised of two commissioners from the City of Ft. Pierce, two council members from the City of

Port St. Lucie, two St. Lucie County Commissioners, and an appointee by the Governor of the State of Florida. The members of the Board are all dedicated public servants and work well together. The Board meets once a month and meetings generally last less than two hours.

The Board appoints three officials: the Fire Chief (who oversees District operations except those related to finance and legal), the Clerk-Treasurer (who oversees the financial and support elements of the District)

and the District Attorney (who provides legal advice to the Board and staff). This team, the Board and its appointees, have worked very well together over time and have a great deal of respect for one another. It is a very supportive environment.

In FY 2017-2018, the Fire District has a general fund budget of \$89.5 and a total budget of \$93.5 million. Revenues come primarily from ad valorem taxes, charges for services, and reserves. More details can be found on the District's website. The District presently has 17 stations and 385 firefighters and 60 civilians for a total of 445 employees. The firefighters are represented by the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 1377.

## CHALLENGES

The Fire District's overriding challenge is resources. From that flow a number of other issues, primarily financial. Presently the District is dipping into reserves to pay for its operating budget and it is difficult to see where any additional funding will come from. It is at the maximum property tax levy allowed by state law (\$3.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value) and in August 2016, 64% of the voters rejected an annual special assessment of \$50 per household for fire-protection services.

The most significant financial challenge is pension. Everyone wants the District’s employees to have a good pension when they retire but the present system is currently funded at only 68% of its estimated liabilities. In other words, the District’s retirement benefits are more generous than the money set aside to fund them. While that situation is not unusual in government, it needs to be addressed, if firefighters are to be assured of a pension when they retire.

The second challenge is to review the organization and the way it carries out its mission. No one believes anything is wrong but it has been 23 years (1994) since an outsider was hired as the fire chief and it will be important for someone to review the District’s policies, procedures, processes and practices with a critical eye. Anything that identifies savings will help with the organization’s financial challenges.

The third challenge will be working with the union and the Board to build consensus around solutions. When resources are tight, it is more difficult because compromise is necessary and not everyone is comfortable compromising.

The fourth challenge is growth. As can be seen in Table 3, the County’s population has grown significantly over the past 30 years and it is expected to continue to grow. Further, while the population as a whole is trending younger, the county’s demographics (22% of the population is 65 or older) translate into a demand for emergency services is higher than in many jurisdictions of comparable size. These two factors mean where existing facilities are not already strained, they are likely to be given the aforementioned resource constraints.

Table 3: Population Growth

Year	Population	Change	Percent Change
1990	150,171	----	----
2000	192,696	42,525	28.3%
2010	277,789	85,093	44.2%
2020 est.	323,184	45,395	16.3%
2030 est.	394,623	71,439	22.1%
2040 est.	455,371	60,748	15.4%

Source: U.S. Census and the University of Florida

Finally, an important goal of the next Chief will be to move the District’s ISO rating from its current 3 to a 2.

### THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

St. Lucie County Fire District is looking for an outstanding manager and leader to be its next Fire Chief. The individual will serve as a trusted advisor, partner and supporter of the Board and staff. He/she should be very comfortable with people, understand what motivates them and how to bring them to consensus. He/she will work very hard, be responsive with a “can do” attitude and exhibit excellent independent judgment as well as the highest level of professionalism, integrity, ethics, and dedication.

The ideal candidate will be an outstanding communicator. The individual will be comfortable speaking to and communicate effectively with people from all walks of life. He/she will be straightforward while being diplomatic. The next Chief will be an excellent presenter to both the Board and to citizens’ groups, but also communicate extremely well with staff up and down the ranks. As noted the District is facing some very difficult issues financially. Successful resolution will depend on the next Chief establishing a strong rapport with the Board and employees and finding solutions that work well for citizens and the staff. Demonstrated successful experience in collective bargaining and creating win-win solutions will be essential. The individual will realize listening is an important part of communications. Customer service will be very important to the individual and expect it to flow throughout the organization.

The District wants someone who is a problem solver with a track record of success and of optimizing resources. He/she will be creative, think outside the box and, given the very tight resources, be relentless in seeking ways to optimize those the District has. When confronted with, “We have always done it this way,” the individual will respond with, “Yes, but why is it the best way?” It may, in fact, be the best methodology but that will need to be demonstrated. Only the best, in terms of both personnel and practices, will be good enough.





Experience with resolving pension shortfalls will be a significant plus.

The Chief will be a leader who can inspire the employees and take the department to the next level. The individual will not be someone who spends all day behind a desk but someone who arrives unannounced at stations to chat with the crews—to hear their ideas and get their input. Building trust, not just with staff, but also residents will be important. Being humble and willing to admit a mistake will help in establishing credibility.

The individual will be proactive and achievement-oriented yet patient with a sense of humor. While he/she will realize that it sometimes takes time to get things done in local government, he/she will have a healthy sense of impatience. The individual will anticipate problems so they can be remedied before they become significant issues. Finally, the Chief will set high expectations for his/her staff and hold them accountable.

The ideal candidate will have a minimum of 10 years of progressively responsible experience in Fire and Rescue Services and at least two years as a manager overseeing the efforts of at least 100 employees and multiple fire stations. The individual will also have extensive experience working with unions and resolving labor-management issues. A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, with a major in administration, management, fire services or a related field, is required. While it is not necessary that a candidate be presently certified in Florida, he/she must obtain at least the basic certification within six months of being hired. Preference will be given to those with a current Florida certification.

## RESIDENCY

The Fire District Chief is required to live within the County's boundaries.



## THE MOST RECENT FIRE DISTRICT CHIEF

The most recent Fire Chief resigned after 25 years with District and two years as Fire Chief.

More information on the County can be found at:

<http://stluciechamber.org/>

<http://www.cityoffortpierce.com/>

<http://www.cityofpsl.com/>

## COMPENSATION

The salary range tops out at approximately \$150,000 although the District hopes to hire between \$125,000 and \$140,000. Benefits are excellent. The Fire District offers a defined benefit pension with a multiplier of three.

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES  
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Under Florida law, all applications are a public record once submitted.

## HOW TO APPLY

E-mail your cover letter and resume to [Recruit43@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit43@cb-asso.com) by December 8, 2017. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to David Collier at (772) 220-4320 or Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

## SCHEDULE

Candidates will be screened between December 9th and January 18th. Interviews are scheduled for January 26th. A selection will be made shortly after the interviews.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

St. Lucie County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and strongly encourages minorities and women to apply. It is also a drug-free workplace.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Fire District has an excellent website at:

<http://www.slcfld.com/>