



FIRE CHIEF

CITY OF ESCONDIDO, CA



THE COMMUNITY

About 18 miles from the Pacific Ocean, nestled in a long valley in the coastal mountains of Southern California, the City of Escondido lies 30 miles northeast of San Diego and roughly 100 miles south of Los Angeles. Home to a population of over 150,000, this vibrant community presents the perfect mix of small-town friendliness and big-city conveniences. Within the 37 square miles that comprise the City, there are many attractive residential communities, a regional mall and hospital, an auto park, various offices, industrial and commercial centers, a cultural arts complex and conference center, plus numerous parks and recreational facilities

Escondido is a welcoming community where its residents enjoy an outstanding quality of life. In addition to plentiful indoor amenities, the City has an abundance of outdoor attractions with fishing and boating at two lakes, camping at Dixon Lake, 11 parks, hiking at the Daley Ranch nature preserve, mountain biking, boating, and fantastic golf courses. It is a family-friendly community with a wide variety of youth recreation programs, the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum, and the San Diego Zoo Safari Park.

Escondido offers a wide variety of art galleries and museums, as well as educational activities for all ages. The California Center for the Arts, Escondido is the home to many performing arts, live theatre, and concert venues. Queen Calafia's Magical Circle in Kit Carson Park was donated to the City by the late internationally renowned artist Niki de Saint Phalle and is her only American sculpture garden. The City's historic downtown district showcases vintage buildings, eclectic shops and boutiques, iconic local eateries, innovative culinary destinations, and more. The Old Escondido Historic neighborhood features 900 historically designated homes with stately Victorians, Craftsman bungalows, and eclectic Art Deco and post-World War II residences.

The Escondido Union School District, the Escondido Union High School District, and the San Pasqual Union School District serve the City's school-aged youth with 19 elementary, seven middle, and seven high schools. In addition to traditional public schools, Escondido is home to multiple charter, private, and higher education schools, including Palomar College and John Paul the Great Catholic University. California State University San Marcos is

minutes away, and seven other colleges and universities are in close proximity, including the University of San Diego, the University of California San Diego, and San Diego State University.

Two airports serve the region: Carlsbad Airport (12 miles west) and the San Diego International Airport (30 miles southwest). Escondido has a robust public transportation system and supports the Transit Center with the Sprinter Train. This European-style light rail system offers easy connections to the Coaster, Breeze, Amtrak, Metrolink, Greyhound, and a future Bus Rapid Transit project. Additionally, the City offers 511, a free phone and web service consolidating the San Diego region's transportation information into a one-stop resource in real-time.

CITY GOVERNMENT

Escondido is a full-service general law city that provides a traditional range of municipal services under the Council-Manager form of government. The City is governed by a five-member City Council, with each of the four City Council members being elected from within a district to serve staggered four-year terms. The Mayor and the City Treasurer are elected at large, with the Mayor serving as the presiding officer for the Council, Successor Agency to the Community Development Commission, Mobile Home Rent Review Board, and Escondido Joint Powers Financing Authority. Additionally, the City Council appoints the City Manager and City Attorney.

The FY 2026-27 Operating budget totals \$261.6 million and municipal services are administered and delivered with the support of 896 FTE.

THE DEPARTMENT & THE OPPORTUNITY

The Escondido Fire Department (EFD) provides fire protection, emergency medical services, emergency management, fire prevention, and community risk reduction services to the City of Escondido and, through a longstanding contract, the Rincon Del Diablo Fire Protection District. Serving approximately 165,000 residents across nearly 50 square miles, the Department responds to the diverse needs of an urban community situated at the intersection of suburban development and one of Southern California's most significant wildland-urban interface (WUI) environments.



The Department is staffed by 101 full-time safety personnel, 18 full-time non-safety employees, seven administrative staff, one emergency management professional, eight fire prevention professionals, and approximately 20 dedicated volunteers. Services are delivered through seven strategically located fire stations, with administrative offices located in the City's combined Police and Fire Headquarters. The Department is organized into five divisions: Administration, Operations, Prevention, Emergency Management, and Support Services, and operates with an annual budget of approximately \$44.89 million.

While the Department continues to provide exceptional emergency response and advanced life support transport services, Escondido is entering an exciting new chapter. The City recognizes that wildfire resilience is no longer solely an emergency response issue. It is essential to protect lives, preserve neighborhoods, support responsible growth, maintain property values, and improve homeowners' ability to obtain and retain affordable fire insurance.

The next Fire Chief will play a central leadership role in advancing a citywide strategy to reduce wildfire risk. The City's recently adopted FY 2026-27 budget includes funding for a sophisticated wildfire mitigation software platform that will use predictive analytics to model wildfire behavior, identify high-risk areas, prioritize mitigation efforts, and document completed work. In future years, the City anticipates investing additional resources, staffing, and equipment to further expand its wildfire mitigation program and establish a dedicated Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) function.

Working collaboratively with City departments, regional agencies, nonprofit organizations, utilities, developers, and community stakeholders, the Fire Chief will help shape a comprehensive approach to wildfire resilience. This effort will include fuel management, brush clearance, defensible space, public education, strategic planning, and implementation of the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan and other WUI mitigation initiatives.

The City has already demonstrated its commitment to resilient community design through developments such as Dixon Trail, which showcases modern wildfire-conscious planning and construction practices. The next Fire Chief will have the opportunity to build upon these efforts and help position Escondido as a statewide leader in proactive wildfire mitigation and community resilience.

This is an exceptional opportunity for an innovative fire service leader who wants to lead beyond the traditional responsibilities of emergency response and help shape the long-term safety, sustainability, and resilience of an entire community.

To learn more about EFD, visit:
<https://fire.escondido.org>



Escondido Fire Department Mission

The Mission of the Escondido Fire Department is to serve the public and to safeguard the community from the impact of fire, medical, and environmental emergencies through education, emergency services, and enforcement.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of Escondido seeks an accomplished and forward-thinking fire service leader who combines exceptional operational expertise with strategic vision, collaborative leadership, and a passion for innovation. While the next Fire Chief must possess a strong foundation in emergency response, emergency medical services, fire prevention, and organizational leadership, this position offers an opportunity to influence far more than the day-to-day operations of an outstanding fire department.

Escondido is looking for a leader who recognizes that wildfire resilience has become one of the defining challenges facing California communities. The successful candidate will understand that reducing wildfire risk is not simply a fire department responsibility -



it is essential to protecting lives, preserving neighborhoods, supporting responsible development, maintaining critical infrastructure, and helping property owners retain access to affordable fire insurance. The next Fire Chief will embrace the opportunity to help shape and implement a comprehensive, community-wide wildfire mitigation strategy that will position Escondido for long-term success.

The ideal candidate will have demonstrated success developing partnerships that extend well beyond the fire service. Experience collaborating with nonprofit organizations, Fire Safe Councils, government agencies, utilities, developers, homeowners' associations, environmental organizations, and community groups will be highly valued. The City seeks a leader who is comfortable bringing diverse stakeholders together around a common purpose and who understands that the most successful wildfire mitigation efforts are built upon collaboration, education, and shared responsibility.

The successful candidate will also be an innovative and data-informed executive who embraces technology as a decision-making tool. Experience implementing or utilizing wildfire modeling, GIS, predictive analytics, risk assessment tools, or other technologies that improve planning and resource allocation will be viewed favorably. The City is making significant investments in wildfire mitigation and seeks a Chief who can help transform information into action while thoughtfully building the organizational capacity needed to support future initiatives.

As a member of the City Manager's executive leadership team, the Fire Chief will be expected to think strategically, communicate effectively, and contribute beyond departmental boundaries. The ideal candidate will be politically astute without being political, capable of providing thoughtful advice to elected officials and executive leadership while

maintaining the confidence of employees, labor organizations, partner agencies, and the community. They will be an approachable leader who values transparency, communicates with candor, and builds trust through consistency, integrity, and accountability.

The Department's employees are dedicated professionals who take great pride in serving the community and are committed to continuous improvement. They seek a Fire Chief who is visible, authentic, and invested in developing people. The successful candidate will foster an environment built upon mutual respect, collaboration, professional development, and succession planning while empowering employees to grow, innovate, and prepare for future leadership opportunities.

The Fire Chief will also serve as an ambassador for the City of Escondido throughout the region. Active participation in regional fire service organizations and collaborative partnerships will be expected, along with the ability to cultivate productive relationships with neighboring jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, and community organizations. A history of building consensus, navigating complex issues, and delivering results through partnership will distinguish the strongest candidates.

The City desires candidates who possess a minimum of ten (10) years of progressively responsible experience in a full-service fire agency, including at least three years of management and administrative responsibility at the Division Chief level or above. A bachelor's degree in fire administration, fire science, public administration, or a closely related field is required. California State Fire Marshal Chief Officer or Chief Fire Officer certification, or the ability to obtain certification within one year of appointment, is required. A master's degree and/or National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer designation is desirable. Residency within the City's General Plan area is preferred.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$198,938 - \$296,105. Placement within the range will be DOQE. The Chief's salary is supplemented by an attractive benefits package that includes, but is not limited to:

CalPERS Retirement: Tier 1 Classic: 3% @ 50 (employee contribution rate = 9%); Single highest year.
Tier 2 Classic: 2% @ 50 (employee contribution rate = 9%); 3-year highest average.
Tier 3 PEPPRA: 2.7% @ 57 (employee contribution rate = 14.5%); 3-year highest average.

Deferred Compensation: Optional Employee contribution plans with Mission Square are available.

Medical Insurance: Kaiser HMO and Kaiser High-Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA).

Dental Insurance: Delta Dental PPO and DMO.

Vision Insurance: Anthem BlueView Vision.

Supplemental Plans: Accident and Hospital Indemnity and Critical Illness.

Cafeteria Plan: \$125 per month + 4% of monthly salary.

Life Insurance: Basic Life and AD&D: ½ base annual earnings + \$25,000
Dependent Life: \$1,000.

Vacation: Accrual rate negotiable and dependent on years of service ranging from 100 to 220 hours per year. Additional 24 hours are credited each July 1. Prior years of service may be considered in determining accrual rate.

Holidays: 10 holidays annually + three floating holidays.

Management Leave: 8 days per year.

Sick Leave: 9 hours per month; no maximum accrual.

Bereavement Leave: 27 hours per year.

Vehicle: Provided.

Employee Discounts: Dell computers, Apple products, AT&T, and Verizon cell phones, gym memberships, plus education and entertainment discounts.

APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

This recruitment will close at **midnight on Sunday, August 23, 2026**. To be considered for this opportunity, upload your cover letter, resume, and list of six professional references using the "Apply Now" feature at www.tbcrecruiting.com.

TB & CO.

Tina White • 619.948.1786
TERI BLACK & COMPANY, LLC
www.tbcrecruiting.com

This will be a confidential process. Following the closing date, resumes will be screened in relation to the criteria articulated in this brochure. Applicants with the most relevant qualifications will be immediately granted preliminary interviews by the consultants. Candidates deemed to be the best qualified will be invited to interview with the City in late September. The City Manager anticipates making a selection in a timely manner following the process and completion of background and reference checks. Please note that references will not be contacted until the end of the process and, at that time, will be done so in close coordination with the candidate selected.

