



THE CITY OF
SANTA FE

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 03/31/2026

TO: Governing Body

FROM: Brian Moya, Fire Chief/ Interim City Manager

SUBJECT: Reclass Assistant Chief Position to At-Will

This memorandum is to formally request approval to transition the current Assistant Fire Chief positions within the Fire Department from their current exempt status to At-Will employment. This reclassification will align the department's executive leadership with broader city employment standards and improve operational efficiency. Reclassifying the Assistant Fire Chief positions to at-will status is a necessary modernization of our department's organizational structure. It promotes fairness across city departments, empowers the Fire Chief to build a highly responsive command staff, and resolves administrative friction regarding executive compensation and leave.

The Assistant Fire Chief role is a critical executive position responsible for high-level strategy, policy implementation, and departmental leadership. Shifting this rank to at-will status is driven by the following key factors:

- **Alignment with Municipal Internal Equity:** Currently, other city staff serving in equivalent executive and deputy director ranks operate as at-will employees. Reclassifying the Assistant Fire Chiefs will correct this internal inconsistency, ensuring that all executive-level personnel across the city are held to the same employment standards and frameworks.
- **Appropriate Classification for Executive Ranks:** Given the level of authority, operational influence, and strategic responsibility inherent in the Assistant Chief role, an at-will designation is standard best practice. Positions at this tier require a high degree of accountability and direct alignment with the administrative goals of the City and the Department.
- **Enhanced Command Staff Flexibility:** To effectively lead the department, the Fire Chief requires the administrative agility to select, assemble, and manage a command team that is fully aligned with their strategic vision. An at-will structure provides the Fire Chief with the necessary flexibility to make swift personnel decisions at the highest level, ensuring the leadership team can adapt to the evolving needs of the department.
- **Resolution of Leave Accumulation Issues:** Under the current exempt classification rules, Assistant Chiefs often face restrictive caps on leave carryover, resulting in the

forfeiture of earned time off. Given the demanding, 24/7 nature of their responsibilities, this creates an unintended penalty for our leadership. Transitioning to an at-will executive status (and its associated executive benefits package) will rectify this issue, allowing these officers to manage their accrued leave more equitably.

Authorized By:

BRIAN MOYA

Brian Moya, Fire Chief/ Interim City Manager

04/01/2026

Date

Michael Garcia, Mayor

Date

Approved By:

Sarah Bolleter-Gonzales

Sarah Bolleter-Gonzales, Interim HR Director

04/01/2026

Date

Marcos Martinez

Marcos Martinez (Apr 1, 2026 10:26:30 MDT)

Marcos Martinez, City Attorney

04/01/2026

Date

Department Approval:

SCOTT OUDERKIRK

SCOTT OUDERKIRK (Apr 1, 2026 16:23:01 MDT)

Scott Ouderkirk, Assistant Chief/ Interim Fire Chief

04/01/2026

Date

MARIO RISSO

MARIO RISSO (Apr 1, 2026 16:20:31 MDT)

Mario Risso, Assistant Chief

04/01/2026

Date

ATTEST:

Geralyn Cardenas, City Clerk

Date