



FIRE CHIEF

City of Walker Fire Department
Walker, Michigan

Annual Salary:

\$111,529.90–\$144,988.91, DOE/DOQ



Are you a collaborative, forward-thinking fire service leader who can guide a growing department through organizational change, strengthen its leadership structure, and support the transition to a sustainable 24/7 staffing model? If so, apply to be the City of Walker's next Fire Chief!

We're looking for an exceptional, relationship-focused leader who is:

- A clear communicator who builds trust with employees, City leadership, partner agencies, and the public
- An experienced mentor who develops personnel and strengthens organizational capacity
- A decisive, safety-focused administrator with sound operational judgment
- Adaptable, accountable, and prepared to lead a department through continued modernization

Help shape the future of fire and emergency services in Walker—read on to learn more about this opportunity!

Executive Recruitment
Provided by



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The City of Walker is a thriving suburban community located in Kent County, adjacent to Grand Rapids, Grandville, Ottawa County, and Alpine Township. Walker combines a strong community identity with convenient access to the cultural, entertainment, employment, and recreational opportunities of the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area.

Residents enjoy tree-lined neighborhoods, parks, trails, shopping districts, quality schools, and a strong sense of connection. The community offers a desirable blend of suburban convenience and small-town character, with neighborhoods where residents know one another and community events provide frequent opportunities to gather. Walker’s location near downtown Grand Rapids gives residents easy access to premier dining, major concerts, professional sports, healthcare, higher education, and regional attractions.

Walker also has a diverse and resilient economy. Its commercial and industrial districts are concentrated along Alpine Avenue, Interstate 96, and the Standale Business District along M-45. Strong industrial and commercial sectors, fiscally responsible leadership, continued growth opportunities, and an urban community with a rural feel contribute to Walker’s appeal.

Local amenities include multiple public and private schools, the Kent District Library Walker Branch, the Walker Ice and Fitness Center, youth and adult recreation programs, and community events such as Winter Fest, the Easter Egg Hunt, and the Memorial Day Parade.



POPULATION
25,132



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
\$76,360



MEDIAN HOME VALUE
\$295,200
AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT:
\$1,202

History



Tourism



GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATION

The City of Walker operates under a commission-manager form of government. The governing body includes seven elected officials serving on the City Commission, including the Mayor. The community is represented by three wards, with two commissioners elected from each ward. The City Manager is appointed and oversees the City’s administrative operations.

The City provides a broad range of municipal services, including:

- Fire and emergency services
- Police services
- Community development
- Public works and infrastructure
- Parks, recreation, and cultural services
- Finance and general administration

The Fire Chief is appointed by the City Commission and reports directly to the City Manager.

THE JOB

FULL JOB DESCRIPTION



The Walker Fire Department provides fire suppression, fire prevention, public education, emergency response, training, inspections, investigations, records management, and regional mutual-aid services. Reporting to the City Manager, the Fire Chief serves as the department's chief operating and administrative officer and provides overall leadership for full-time and paid-on-call personnel.

The new Fire Chief will:

- Plan, direct, coordinate, and evaluate all departmental operations
- Establish policies, goals, procedures, and performance expectations
- Prepare and administer the department's operating and capital budgets
- Develop a sustainable staffing plan supporting the transition to 24/7 operations
- Strengthen the department's rank structure and develop its leadership team
- Coordinate mutual aid, emergency planning, and interagency partnerships
- Oversee training, safety, fire prevention, inspections, and community education
- Advise the City Manager and City Commission on fire and public safety matters
- Respond to critical emergencies and remain available when department needs require

The Chief will also guide modernization efforts while maintaining trust, accountability, operational readiness, and a strong service culture.

DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

Divisions within the Department

- Full-Time Operations Division
- Paid-On-Call Division
- Fire Prevention and Inspection
- Administration

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

- Fire Chief: 1 FTE
- Office Manager: 1 FTE
- Fire Marshal: 1 FTE
- Fire Prevention Inspector/Lieutenant: 1 FTE
- Full-Time Firefighters: 18 FTE
- Paid-On-Call Captain: 1
- Paid-On-Call Lieutenants: 2
- Paid-On-Call Firefighters: 28
- Battalion Chief Positions: 2 approved positions, vacant as of July 1, 2026
- Fire Stations: 3
- Annual Emergency Responses: Approximately 1,000



DEPARTMENT BUDGET

~2.89 MILLION

KEY PROJECTS FOR 2026-2029

- Continue modernizing the Fire Department and sustain momentum in the transition from a paid-on-call model to full-time, 24/7 operations.
- Establish an effective rank structure and recruit or develop a capable downline leadership team, including the approved Battalion Chief positions.
- Review staffing needs for all three fire stations and identify a sustainable model that provides appropriate service levels.
- Evaluate existing fire station conditions and recommend renovations or improvements necessary to support continuous staffing.
- Develop comprehensive policies, procedures, and operational practices appropriate for a full-time, 24/7 department.
- Support the City's informational campaign related to a proposed dedicated 10-year police and fire millage.
- Build productive working relationships with Police Department leadership, City management, elected officials, regional partners, and employees.
- Develop a strategic plan aligning Fire Department priorities with the City's broader goals and objectives.

IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will be both an organizational builder and a steady, experienced operator. Walker needs a Fire Chief who can establish trust, create structure, and promote sustainable performance while the department continues its transition to a full-time, 24/7 operating model.

The successful candidate will communicate clearly with firefighters, City leadership, mutual-aid partners, elected officials, and the public, especially during periods of change. They will be a relationship builder who earns credibility, reduces friction, and develops organizational support for new systems and expectations.

The next Chief should bring a teaching and mentoring mindset, with the ability to identify skill gaps, develop emerging leaders, and help employees succeed rather than relying solely on command-and-control leadership. They must exercise sound judgment under pressure, make timely decisions, and set a clear tone of integrity, accountability, professionalism, and follow-through.

Patience, adaptability, and safety-focused leadership will be essential as staffing, policies, facilities, roles, and procedures continue to evolve.

EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS

Required:

- Bachelor's degree in Fire Science or a closely related field
- Increasingly responsible experience with a fire department comparable to or larger than the City of Walker's department
- At least eight years of upper-level administrative responsibility within a fire department or public safety organization
- Firefighter Training Council Instructor certification
- Fire Officer III certification
- Valid Michigan driver's license, satisfactory driving record, and ability to maintain both throughout employment
- Knowledge of modern firefighting, emergency response, training, fire prevention, equipment, and apparatus
- Knowledge of budgeting, personnel administration, labor relations, purchasing, and operations management
- Ability to successfully complete a comprehensive background investigation, physical examination, and psychological examination
- Ability to report to the City of Walker within one hour

Preferred:

- Fire and Arson Investigator certification, or the ability to obtain it as soon as possible after appointment
- Experience using data to assess community risk and organizational vulnerabilities
- Demonstrated expertise in strategic planning, change management, succession planning, and organizational innovation
- Experience guiding a department through conversion from paid-on-call operations to a full-time, 24/7 staffing model
- Familiarity with NFPA standards, fire prevention codes, municipal ordinances, and applicable state and federal regulations



SALARY & BENEFITS

Compensation: \$111,529.90–\$144,988.91, depending on experience and qualifications

Medical Coverage: Three Priority Health medical plan options, including HSA-compatible plans. The City makes annual HSA contributions ranging from \$1,600 for single coverage to \$3,200 for double or family coverage.

Dental Coverage: Delta Dental coverage at no cost to the employee

Vision Coverage: VSP vision coverage available at the employee's expense

Paid Leave: Vacation accrues at 6.67 hours per month, with eight additional hours added to the vacation bank every two years of service. Employees receive 16 personal hours, 12 holidays, and 96 sick hours annually.

Retirement: The City contributes 6% of regular base pay to a 401(a) plan. When the employee contributes an additional 2%, the City contribution increases to 8%. The 401(a) plan has a two-year vesting period. The City also contributes 2% of regular base pay to a Retirement Health Savings account, subject to five-year vesting. A 457(b) plan is available after six months.

Insurance: City-paid \$40,000 life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance, plus short- and long-term disability coverage

Additional Benefits: Flexible spending account, employee assistance program, tuition reimbursement of up to \$3,500 annually, medical and dental opt-out incentives, and a free employee membership to the Walker Ice and Fitness Center

HOW TO APPLY

Apply Here



For more information on this position, contact:

Rudy Jackson, Senior Vice President Executive Recruitment

Rudyjackson@governmentresource.com | 817-897-8080

The City of Walker is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other status protected by law. Applicants selected as finalists for this position will be subject to a comprehensive background investigation, physical assessment, and psychological assessment.