

RALEIGH-DURHAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Invites Your Interest in the Position of

FIRE CHIEF





The [Raleigh-Durham International Airport](#) (RDU) seeks a strategic and dynamic **Fire Chief** with a safety-focused mindset to lead its dedicated fire department. This Director-level position will provide strong, decisive leadership to a team of fire service professionals, ensuring operational excellence and readiness in all emergency response functions. The next **Fire Chief** will possess solid, hands-on experience in airport operations, ideally within an airport setting, and a clear grasp of the complex regulations and safety standards that come with managing aviation environments. The ideal candidate will have a proven track record in regulatory compliance and airport ordinances, as this position proactively monitors and addresses all safety-related issues to protect airport personnel, infrastructure, and passengers.

The **Fire Chief** will also play a critical role in cultivating and maintaining strong automatic and mutual aid partnerships with regional emergency response agencies to ensure seamless coordination in the event of large-scale or multi-jurisdictional incidents. The ideal candidate must demonstrate a deep commitment to the safety and well-being of everyone at RDU, encouraging a culture of vigilance, care, and professionalism throughout the department. Additionally, the ideal candidate has a track record of being a team builder across shifts and divisions while being adept at fostering and maintaining a climate of high morale and engagement.



The next Fire Chief will lead a team of fire service professionals who monitor and address all safety-related issues to protect airport personnel, infrastructure, and passengers.



About the Organization:

The Raleigh-Durham International Airport is governed by the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority, an eight-member board. The Airport Authority was established by the NC General Assembly in 1939. The cities of Durham and Raleigh, along with Durham and Wake counties, each appoint two members to the board. The Airport Authority operates much like a small city and is similarly classified as such, due in part to the fact that it has its own law enforcement and crash/fire/rescue departments. The Authority employs approximately 400 full-time staff. The campus hosts approximately 5,000 badged employees who work for vendor partners (e.g., food/beverage/retail concessionaires, airlines, rental car companies, as well as a variety of janitorial, maintenance, and engineering/architectural contractors).

Served by 19 airlines, RDU offers flights to over 80 non-stop destinations across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, and the Caribbean. Major carriers include American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and newer entrants like Avelo Airlines and Breeze Airways. As RDU welcomes more guests, adds new airlines, and increases the number of destinations it serves, capacity-related enhancements are underway to prepare the airport for growth. Vision 2040 is the long-range roadmap the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority follows when making decisions about major campus construction projects. Vision 2040 calls for RDU to preserve existing infrastructure while planning for the future. Key highlights include the construction of a new 10,000-foot runway, capacity-driven terminal modifications and expansion, ground transportation, parking, roadway construction, and general aviation facilities.

Both the RDU Fire-Rescue and Police departments work closely with a number of federal agencies that have a presence at Raleigh-Durham International Airport including the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). RDU is a participating airport in the U.S. CBP's Global Entry Trusted Traveler Network. This program allows U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and pre-approved citizens of Mexico and the Netherlands an opportunity to use an automated kiosk to bypass the standard passport screening lines, thereby reducing wait times.



Watch [Vision 2040](#), a 2-minute video detailing the long-range roadmap RDU is following to prepare the airport for the growing demand as it welcomes more guests, adds new airlines and increases the number of destinations.



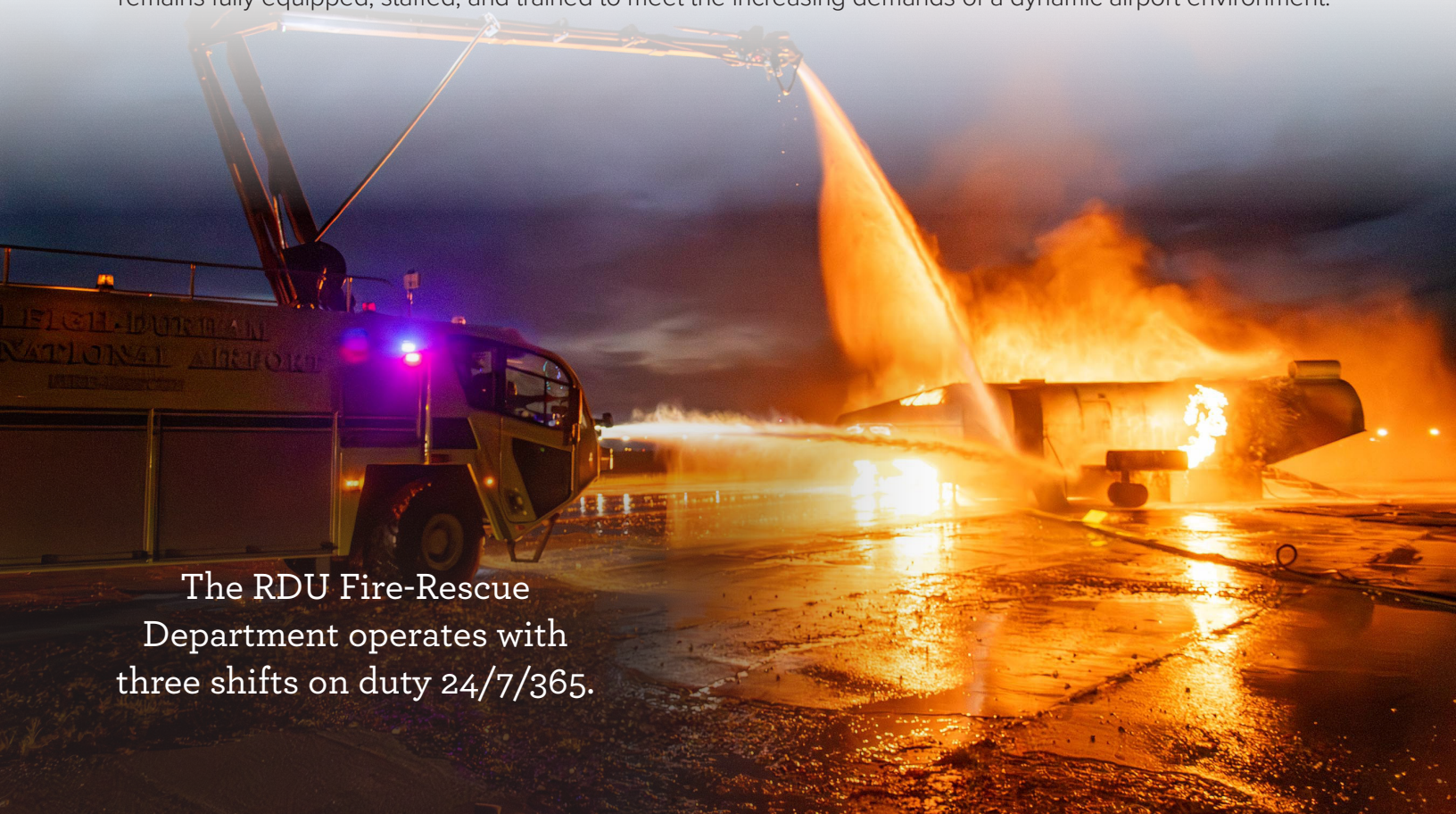
Cultivating and maintaining strong automatic and mutual aid partnerships with regional emergency response agencies, such as Raleigh Fire Department (left) will be a critical role for the next RDU **Fire Chief**.

About the Position:

The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority Fire-Rescue Department operates under the leadership of a Chief, with three shifts on duty 24/7/365 inclusive of a deputy fire chief, captain, lieutenant, and three fire engineers per shift. The **Fire Chief** partners with the Police Chief and Director of Emergency Operations to oversee emergency services and response operations within the Airport Authority and works closely with our Airport Operations, Emergency Operations, Risk Management, and Safety and Insurance Departments. Responsible for a budget of approximately \$4.25 million and 29 authorized positions, the **Fire Chief** directly supervises four key leaders—the Deputy Chief of Administration and three Deputy Chiefs who manage daily shift operations. The next **Fire Chief** should have experience managing budgets of a similar scale, with a strong preference given to those who have worked in or have significant experience within an airport authority environment. The next **Fire Chief** should have airport authority experience from a comparable airport setting. Candidates with substantial military airport experience may be considered, but must demonstrate the ability to adapt to a civilian, corporate airport authority setting.

Key Position Priorities include but are not limited to:

- Fill several key leadership positions within the fire department.
- Oversee budgeting and financial forecasting, including long-term capital improvement planning (CIP) for the replacement of essential apparatus and equipment.
- Develop and implement a departmental strategic plan to guide improvements and operational excellence.
- Manage the department's role in major airport development projects, such as the new runway, Terminal 2 enhancements, the John Brantley Boulevard roadway project, and the design and construction of a new fire station beginning in late 2025.
- Proactively plan for and respond to RDU's continued growth in passenger volume, ensuring the fire department remains fully equipped, staffed, and trained to meet the increasing demands of a dynamic airport environment.



The RDU Fire-Rescue
Department operates with
three shifts on duty 24/7/365.

Required Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in fire science, emergency management, or related field.
- Six (6) or more years of firefighting experience, with at least two of those years leading under a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 139 airport operation certificate, preferably with an airport authority.
- Four (4) or more years of related work experience in a supervisory role
- Valid NC Driver's License
- Class B Driver's License
- Airport Fire Officer (ARFF/WG-AAAE) Certification
- EMT Licensure and Certification

Preferred Qualifications:

- Ten (10) or more years of firefighting experience, with at least two of those years leading under a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part 139 airport operation certificate, preferably with an airport authority.
- Six (6) or more years of related work experience in a supervisory role
- Graduation from an Advanced Leadership Development Program
- Certified Airport Master Firefighter



The **Fire Chief** oversees a budget of \$4.25 million and 29 authorized positions.



The Successful Candidate is:

- is an individual with impeccable integrity and a proven record of consistency in managing both internal and external relationships in order to develop trust and to create opportunities for collaborative problem solving, strong stakeholder relationships, and partnerships;
- thinks beyond traditional fire service by embracing a mindset that goes beyond typical fire department operations and applying strategic thinking that aligns with airport authority priorities—not just public safety norms;
- provides strong, visionary leadership in managing and developing the fire department team.
- brings proven experience and expertise in airport operations, specifically within an airport authority environment;
- demonstrates a deep understanding of regulatory compliance and risk management, maintaining vigilant oversight of all airport safety;
- prioritizes the safety and well-being of RDU's passengers, staff, and visitors in every aspect of department operations;
- builds and maintains strong automatic and mutual aid and automatic response partnerships across the region to ensure seamless emergency collaboration;
- thinks beyond traditional fire service boundaries and aligns leadership strategies with the operational structure and priorities of an airport authority;
- understands and embraces that the RDU Airport Authority is a corporate environment—not a municipal one—and brings the right set of leadership and management skills to succeed in that context;
- recognizes that RDU is a complex, high-stakes operational environment requiring specialized, nontraditional experience; and,
- facilitates morale-building and healing within the department by addressing internal challenges with empathy, consistency, and team-centered leadership.

Salary and Benefits:

The hiring range is \$122,610.80 to \$160,845.88 with a full range of \$112,132.80 - \$209,558.96. Salaries are determined through a compensation calculation that evaluates experience and credentials for all positions. The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority provides an [excellent benefits package](#), including being part of the North Carolina LGERS pension program and Firefighters' and Rescue Squad Workers' Pension Fund (FRSWPF).



About the Community:

The Raleigh-Durham International Airport is located at the western edge of Wake County, midway between the cities of Durham and Raleigh in North Carolina. Wake County is home to 11 municipalities including the capital city of Raleigh. Accessed by I-40 and four major U.S. highways, Wake County is the most populous county in the state with a population of 1.2 million and growing. Consistently rated as one of the best places to live and work in America, Wake County offers 11 principal colleges and universities including NC State University. Wake County is also the center of state government, with the Capitol Building, legislature and many government offices located in the City of Raleigh.

Known as the City of Oaks, Raleigh has received numerous awards recognizing its excellence economically, culturally and environmentally. In 2025, the Milken Institute ranked Raleigh the #1 Best-Performing Large City in the U.S., citing its strong job growth and tech sector performance. U.S. News, WalletHub, and other national outlets have consistently named Raleigh a top city for real estate, remote workers, veterans, and college students, while also ranking it among the best places to live in America. Additionally, Raleigh has received accolades in environmental leadership, including Smart Cities awards and recognition for its urban agriculture and climate initiatives. Culturally, Raleigh's vibrant arts scene and food culture have earned praise from Southern Living, Travel + Leisure, and AAA, with local chefs, such as Ashley Christensen, and venues frequently receiving national attention.



A bustling and growing airport, RDU is served by 19 airlines and offers flights to over 80 nonstop destinations across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, and the Caribbean.



Raleigh has more than 9,000 acres of parkland and almost 1,300 acres of water, offering recreational activities year-round. A nationally acclaimed greenway system spans more than 180 miles, providing walking, jogging and hiking trails that connect many of the City of Raleigh's 200+ parks and Town of Cary's 30+ parks. [Dorothea Dix Park](#), commonly known as Dix Park, is Raleigh's premier urban oasis—a sprawling 308-acre landscape featuring rolling meadows, mature oak groves, and panoramic skyline views right on the edge of downtown. Highlights include the Southeast's largest adventure playground—the newly opened Gipson Play Plaza with climbing towers, a sensory maze, water features, and picnic groves—and sprawling open fields perfect for picnics, drones, disc golf, dog walking, and sunset strolls.

The NHL Carolina Hurricanes, Carolina Mudcats Low-A Baseball, NC FC Men's and NC Courage Women's pro soccer teams attract visitors throughout the year and serve as an entertainment hub for community members and visitors alike. Raleigh's cultural scene includes renowned institutions like the NC Opera, NC Symphony, and Carolina Ballet, in addition to three major state museums that showcase the city's rich heritage in arts, history, and natural sciences.



Towering above museum visitors, the skeleton of *Acrocanthosaurus*—known as the ‘Terror of the South’—dominates the dinosaur gallery at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh (above). The sunflower field at Dix Park in Raleigh (below) provides a stunning backdrop for photos, making it a must-visit spot within the park's 308 acres.



Neighboring Durham County, with a population of 326,000 and located in the Research Triangle Region of North Carolina, is home to Research Triangle Park and is one of the most economically competitive regions in the world. Research and development from many private and federal labs have fueled business and economic growth in Durham County and has made the region a world leader in life sciences, information technology, and clean technology. Consistently ranked among the top places to live, work and play, Durham is a magnet for talent, which helps attract innovative companies working in high-growth industries. Also called the “City of Medicine,” Durham has long been known for world-class medical facilities, including top-ranked Duke University Medical Center, and an industry-leading pharmaceutical sector. The healthcare industry in Durham County includes more than 300 medical and health-related companies and medical practices with a combined payroll that exceeds \$1.2 billion annually. More recently, Durham County has become a hotspot for entrepreneurs and high-tech startups, propelled by the launch of American Underground, a startup incubator and accelerator.

Durham boasts a premier performing arts center and the Durham Bulls AAA baseball team. In addition to Duke University, Durham is home to North Carolina Central University, the nation’s first public Historically Black College and University, now a major center for biotech and bio-manufacturing R&D, and Durham Technical Community College, a key partner in preparing a competitive workforce. Private investment flourishes, redeveloping former tobacco and textile warehouses and historic buildings into mixed-use developments filled with trendy housing options, restaurants, artist studios, retail spaces, and small businesses. Research Triangle Park (RTP), located just 6.5 miles from the RDU Airport, is a 7,000-acre special county research and production district encompassed on three sides by the city of Durham, with a portion in Wake County, and served by a Durham postal substation. RTP houses more than 170 major research companies employing 39,000 full-time employees and 10,000 contract workers.



The AAA Durham Bulls baseball team attracts fans from all over the state.



Durham is renowned for its world-class medical facilities.



Downtown Durham bustles with diverse restaurants, breweries and small businesses.



The Durham Performing Arts Center, known as the DPAC, is the largest performing arts center in the Carolinas.

To Apply:

Please visit <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/developmentalassociates> and click on the **Fire Chief – Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority** title.

- All applications must be submitted online via the Developmental Associates application portal (link above) – NOT the organization’s employment application portal, nor any other external website.
- Resumes and cover letters must be uploaded with the application.
- Applicants should apply by **August 16, 2025**.
- The Selection Committee will invite successful semi-finalists to participate in virtual interviews and skill evaluation on **September 17-18, 2025**. Candidates are encouraged to reserve these dates for virtual meetings should they be invited to participate. Final interviews with semi-finalists will be on-site following the virtual assessment at a mutually convenient time.
- Direct inquiries to hiring@developmentalassociates.com.

The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer and welcomes all applicants.



Developmental Associates, LLC manages the recruitment and selection process for this position. To learn more about our selection process, visit <https://developmentalassociates.com/client-openings/>, select “Client Openings,” and scroll down to “Important Information for Applicants.”