

TamilNadu Fire department faces 20% staff shortage

The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services Department faces a 20 per cent shortage of officers, and a recruitment notification announced before the elections is yet to be fulfilled.

A number of officers across various levels are set to retire in the next couple of years, which could push up the number of vacancies in the department, sources said.

“The Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board is the agency mandated to recruit fire department officials. The department is waiting for the notification and recruitment of firemen,” a source said. “Many officers are retiring in 2017-18. There has been no fresh recruitment in recent years,” another source told The Hindu.

According to officials, there are 315 fire stations across Tamil Nadu. “Tamil Nadu has the highest penetration of fire stations in rural and urban areas. We are working to further reduce our response time to distress calls,” the source said.

Officials also say there is lack of proper infrastructure in fire stations. “In places like Velachery, Virugambakkam, and Maduravoyal, there is no proper fire station. There is no land for the fire station, no facilities for staff. These are just temporary stations. Legislators and corporation officials cite lots of permissions required to acquire land for these fire stations,” a Fire Department official said on condition of anonymity.

As per the norms specified by the Standing Fire Advisory Committee (SFAC), there needs to be one fire station for every 10 sq.km in urban areas.

“The department is setting up two to three fire stations every year. It requires about Rs. one crore per station,” the official said.

Rescue operations

In 2015, the department received 1,517 calls and made a total of 25, 378 rescue operations. These included persons, animals, snakes and other such rescues.

In 2016, till June 13, the department received 735 calls and has made 47 rescues.

Many employees are set to retire and no steps have been taken on the recruitment notification.