



Become a Firefighter

Firefighting is a physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding profession. Firefighters must be highly trained and ready to respond to various emergencies, including structure and wildland fires, hazardous materials incidents, canyon rescues, vehicle collisions, and life-threatening medical emergencies.

In addition to emergency response, firefighters assume numerous non-emergency responsibilities. These encompass public education, routine maintenance of equipment and fire stations, ongoing training, safety inspections, and community engagement. This webpage is intended to assist individuals interested in a firefighting career by outlining the general job requirements and providing insight into the daily responsibilities and challenges of the profession.

Education

- High School Diploma or G.E.D.
(required) Community College Programs:
- EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) - (required), typically a semester course
- Fire Science Courses - (desirable) Associate's degree
- Basic Fire Academy - (required by many Fire Departments).

Participating Colleges and programs in the area:

- Alan Hancock College:
 - <https://www.hancockcollege.edu/pathways/public-services/firetech.php>
- Oxnard College:
 - <https://www.oxnardcollege.edu/departments/academic/public-safety-fire->

- technology
- Bakersfield College
 - <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/academics/pathways/pst/fire-technology/index.html>
- Bachelor's Degree (desirable, especially for career advancement)- Fire Science Administration, Public Administration, Emergency Medical Management, Human Resource Management, or related degree programs.

Skills

Bilingual - (desirable), especially Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, etc., based on individual community demographics.

Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is essential to a firefighter's ability to perform critical job tasks safely and efficiently. Individuals pursuing a fire service career should maintain a regular physical fitness program that includes cardiovascular and strength training. The previously listed community college may offer physical fitness courses to help guide you in achieving your fitness goals and practices.

Standardized Tests utilized by several Fire Departments**:

- CPAT (Candidate Physical Ability Test)- California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee
- Consolidated Physical Ability Test (aka- Biddle Physical Ability Test)

**Research individual Fire Department application requirements. Pay special attention to the physical agility test requirements and timeframes for certification.

Work Experience

- Fire Service - U.S. Forest Service, CalFire, Volunteer, Reserve, or Paid-Call Programs, Prevention
- Emergency Medical Services - Ambulance EMT and/or Paramedic; Emergency Room Technician
- Trade experience - Construction; trades involving the use of tools, heavy equipment, and automobile service/repair
- Service jobs - Working with people/customer service, supervision, and project management

Community Involvement (Volunteer Work)

- Fire department - Explorer Program
- Boy or Girl Scouts
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Senior Programs
- Churches

Preparation

Preparing to Apply for a Firefighting Position

Pursuing a career in firefighting requires more than physical readiness and training—it also demands professionalism, strong character, and thorough preparation. Here are some key steps to help you stand out during the application process:

1. Make Smart, Future-Focused Decisions

Fire departments carry out comprehensive background checks during hiring, which include Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records and Department of Justice (DOJ) screenings. Having a clean driving record and a responsible personal history is crucial.

2. Be Mindful of Your Online Presence

What you share on social media can affect how hiring committees perceive you. Keep a professional and respectful online image.

3. Visit Local Fire Stations

Take initiative by visiting fire stations in your area. Come prepared with knowledge about the community and the specific department. Dress professionally, ask insightful questions, and bring a notepad to take notes.

4. Build a Strong Resume

Your resume should emphasize your education, work experience, and community involvement. Customize it to showcase your dedication to public service and your readiness for the job's demands.

5. Practice Your Interview Skills

Confidence in interviews is crucial. Conduct mock interviews with friends, family, or colleagues. Utilize resources like Toastmasters to enhance your public speaking skills. Consider recording yourself or practicing in front of a mirror to refine your delivery.

6. Begin your education and physical training early. Start working toward the necessary

certifications and build your physical fitness well in advance. This will help you meet or exceed the standards required by most fire departments.

7. Be aware of grooming and appearance standards. Many fire departments have grooming policies that may include regulations on body art, piercings, and hair. Familiarize yourself with these standards early to ensure compliance.