



SALINAS FIRE DEPARTMENT

Employment Informational Packet

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be a firefighter, to be able to make a difference in a person's life, to help people on a daily basis and under entirely different circumstances? Someone suffering a heart attack, another was in an auto accident. And what if one was trapped in a burning building? Would you be able to do the job, to fulfill your duty, to answer the call and help them? These are the questions asked and answered by firefighter's everyday across the nation.

Firefighting is a dangerous, exciting, and fulfilling job. The men and women of the fire service put their lives on the line for the betterment of society when they come to work. Paid or volunteer, these are the everyday heroes of our society. Do you have what it takes to answer the call of duty when asked? Read more to find out what it takes to become a part of one of the most respected professions in the country.

A FIRE SERVICE CAREER

Becoming a professional firefighter is one of the most difficult career ambitions in the country. On average, there are over 100 people who apply for each position. For the 2005 test administered by the Salinas Fire Department there were over 1,000 applications received by Human Resources with 25 people being hired over a two-year period. While some may attribute getting hired to good luck or having a good interview, in reality it takes passion, commitment and determination to earn the badge of a firefighter.

This section has been compiled to give potential applicants an insight into the fire service and the requirements and recommendations that accompany this career path.

JOB OVERVIEW

The time has come and gone when firefighters were responsible for fighting fires along with the occasional medical emergency and vehicle lockout. In 2006, the Salinas Fire Department responded to over 7,500 medical emergencies accounting for 70% of the call volume. In this day and age, the men and women of the fire service are much more than firefighters, they are the first responders to any type of emergency, be it medical, fire-related, of a hazardous material, or a terrorist incident. In order to keep up with the changing world and call volume, firefighters are constantly training and taking classes in order to do their job to the highest level and degree. Firefighters train continuously to meet state and federal mandates; there is ongoing continuing education related to hazardous materials, fire suppression, medical emergencies and other subjects.

Additionally, training includes updating personnel in new technologies and methodologies to ensure preparedness for the broad range of situations to which the fire department responds. Daily duties of a firefighter include maintenance of the fire station, training, tool and equipment maintenance, community outreach and services, fire prevention, keeping current with the department standard operating procedures, pre-planning buildings in the fire station's response area as well as yard work, cooking and cleaning. Most fire departments work a full 24-hour shift. They report to duty at 0800 hours and are relieved from duty at 0800 hours the following day. The work schedule is further broken up into three shifts – "A" Shift, "B" Shift, and "C" Shift. Each department differs as to how the shifts rotate the work schedule.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

While every department's minimum qualifications are different, these typically consist of completion of high school with a valid diploma or G.E.D., a Class C California Driver's License, and a minimum age of 18 years old. The Salinas City Fire Department requires all of the above along with an Emergency Medical Technician certificate.

Physical requirements include uncorrected vision of 20/40 or better in one eye, and 20/100 in the other, or corrected to 20/20 in one eye and 20/40 in the other. Hearing is expected to be within normal range and weight must be in proportion to height.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

A firefighter must be able to work under various circumstances and be able to make sound decisions while working in stressful situations. In addition, firefighters must possess great interpersonal skills and the ability to work and live with people of diverse backgrounds. Firefighters spend a third of their life at their station working full 24-hour shifts away from home and family. Firefighters must be able to exercise common sense and work both as an individual and as a part of a team.

SELECTION PROCESS

The hiring process can be a trying experience due to the amount of time spent on the various tests required to determine whether a candidate is hireable or not. It consists of a written test, a physical agility exam, an oral board interview, a chief's interview and a psychological test, background investigation and physical exam. Contact the city's personnel department to obtain information for the next firefighter test. Some cities, including Salinas, will offer interest cards and will contact you when the department will hold its' testing.

EDUCATION

The first step into the door of the fire service is taking classes in fire science. These classes are designed to teach the prospective firefighter the basics of firefighting. Subjects include fire behavior, building construction, and fire service tradition to name a few. These classes are offered at various community colleges and allow the student to attain an Associates degree or an Associates of Science degree. Listed below are a few community colleges that offer Fire Science programs:

- Hartnell College; Salinas
- Monterey Peninsula College; Monterey
- Cabrillo College; Aptos
- Alan Hancock College; Santa Maria
- Mission College; Santa Clara

For more information visit the website below to find a college with Fire Science programs:

- <http://www.uscollegesearch.org>

Also, take into account that becoming a firefighter is not an easy task. Begin planning for your future by taking courses aside from fire science in order to fulfill the general education requirements for an AA/AS degree or to possibly transfer to a four-year university. Also, begin taking CPR and First Aid courses in order to begin enrolling in an EMT program.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN/PARAMEDIC

As stated previously, the majority of a fire department's call volume consists of medical emergencies. Thus, the minimum requirement for most departments is the completion of an Emergency Medical Technician course. This course introduces the student to basic anatomy of the human body, basic life-support techniques and how to deal with various injuries and sicknesses. Becoming an EMT is also a prerequisite to be accepted into a paramedic program or school. Becoming a Paramedic can take up to nine months of schooling which includes classroom time, an emergency room internship and an in-field evaluation of the paramedic's abilities. Being a paramedic is not required by every fire department but is highly desirable. Some local paramedic schools are:

- Emergency Training Services; Santa Cruz

- Westmed College; San Jose
- Foothill College; Palo Alto
- M.E.T.S. Inc.; Concord

PRE-SERVICE ACADEMY

While not listed as a requirement by some departments, enrolling in a pre-service academy will be a tremendous help to the aspiring firefighter. These academies are typically 14-18 weeks in length full-time or up to 20 weeks part-time and are extremely rigorous and arduous. Below are a few local fire academies offered to the public:

- Salinas City Fire Department; Salinas
- Monterey Peninsula College; Monterey
- Alan Hancock College; Santa Maria
- Central Coast Fire Academy; Hollister

Contact your local community college counselor and inquire where local pre-service academies are held and how to enroll.

EXPLORERS

The purpose of an Explorer Program is to expose co-ed high school students and young adults between the ages of 15-20 to a future career in the Fire Service. Typically duties of an Explorer include training in fire service skills, uniform etiquette, responsibility, and teamwork. Explorers also take part in community events as representatives of their department. An explorer program is a great building block to a career in the fire service. Local fire department's that offer this program include:

- Salinas Rural Fire Department
- Monterey Fire Department
- Seaside Fire Department

- Pacific Grove Fire Department

Contact your local department for explorer opportunities and how to become a member.

RESERVE/VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Obtaining a position as a reserve or volunteer firefighter will further enhance your knowledge of the fire service. Reserve/Volunteers are expected to train, respond to calls, and fulfill the daily duties required of a paid firefighter. Typically, becoming a reserve or volunteer requires the candidate to have a Firefighter-1 Certification and in most cases an Emergency Medical Technician-1 Certification. Some department may even offer Paid-Call Volunteers. Below are departments in Monterey County that offer a volunteer or reserve program.

- Salinas Rural Fire Department
- North Monterey County Fire Department
- Carmel Valley Fire Department
- Pacific Grove Fire Department
- Seaside Fire Department
- Soledad Fire Department
- Gonzales Fire Department

Contact your local fire department and inquire whether they offer reserve or volunteer opportunities and how to apply for the position.

RIDE-A-LONGS

Contact your local fire department and obtain information on how to participate in a ride-a-long. The fire service is constantly doing outreach work at local schools and participating in a ride-a-long will give the applicant a view as to how the fire service works on a day-to-day basis.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Being physically fit is a must in the fire service. The following is an excerpt taken from the Salinas Fire Department's job description explaining that a firefighter must "have the physical strength to lift, carry and drag persons weighing more than 120 pounds for transport to triage, and up to 300 pounds with assistance, while carrying fifty pounds of equipment attached to the body. Physical strength to lift up to 75 pounds on a frequent basis, and to pull, drag and extend a two and one half-inch charged fire hose, and 75 pound ladders. Possess the ability to work at heights on an aerial lift of up to 50 feet above ground."

For an aspiring firefighter, staying physically fit prior to being hired, during the academy and probation, and throughout the span of that person's career is an important aspect of doing the job well. The public counts on firefighters to be able and willing to do their job regardless of the hazard. This requires a physical and mental strength that is obtained by staying fit and ready for the task at hand.

IN CLOSING...

One of the most important things you can do as an aspiring firefighter is to stay positive and keep a good attitude. The reality is that you will not be hired overnight. Some candidates will take only a handful of tests before they're hired; others will take more. Many candidates become frustrated with the process and choose a different career path; however, if you stay determined and driven to your goal of becoming a firefighter, you will have a positive outcome and enjoy a rewarding and exciting career.

*"If you do this job properly, there is nothing more noble
you will do with your life."*

-Andrew Jacobs Sr.