

## General Qualifications

In the past, the minimum requirements for the average Firefighter testing process have included: a minimum age of 18, possession of a valid California Drivers License, a clean driving record, and an education equivalent to a high school graduation. Physical requirements have included visual acuity of 20/70 uncorrected in each eye and correctable to 20/25 in both eyes, with normal range depth perception and the ability to identify primary colors. Hearing has been expected to be within normal range and weight in proportion to height.

A Firefighter must have good judgment, good communication skills, demonstrate mechanical aptitude, basic math skills, and ability to understand and learn firefighting material. In addition, a Firefighter must be able to face hazardous, life threatening situations, and have coping skills for managing unpleasant and difficult situations. Firefighters must have excellent interpersonal skills and be able to work well under stressful situations. At the same time, they must be team players, able to get along with a variety of people in close quarters. The ability to follow orders and work in a paramilitary organization is also important. Firefighting is physically demanding and personnel in the fire service must be in excellent physical condition.



## Miscellaneous

There are several other ways to prepare for a career in the fire service. Occasionally, there are civilian jobs in dispatch, administration, or fire prevention. Most jurisdictions have a recorded job information hotline that lists vacancies. Current employment as paramedic, nurse, medical assistant, or in any direct service capacity in an emergency environment is helpful.

It is important to:

1. Visit fire stations - this is an excellent opportunity for interested individuals to talk to personnel and discuss the pros & cons of the profession and determine whether or not the day-to-day routine(s) match their own skills and interests.
2. Develop a resume to include all fire service related information so it is easily available when the application period opens.

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**SANGER FIRE DEPARTMENT**



## How To Become a Firefighter

### Preparing for a Fire Service Career

This has been prepared to give prospective applicants a general overview of firefighter job requirements in the fire services. It also provides information concerning which efforts may be helpful to those seeking a Firefighter career.

Although some of the information contained here has been drawn from the Sanger Fire Department, it is also generic and applies to pursuing a career in the fire services in any jurisdiction.

The hiring process for entry-level Firefighter is extremely competitive and requires much effort.

It is not uncommon for a department to have upwards of 4,000 applicants for as little as three or four job openings.

## Job Overview

A career in the fire service is both challenging and rewarding. Fire suppression is only one of a wide variety of duties performed by Firefighters. In fact, approximately 85% of all fire department responses are emergency medical calls. Other typical assignments may include fire prevention, education, commercial and residential fire inspections, community outreach and services, post-fire salvage and cleanup, and equipment maintenance.

When fighting fires, work apparel and equipment weighing approximately 45 pounds is worn. A significant amount of time is spent inspecting, cleaning and maintaining this equipment and training in its use. A Firefighter is usually a member of a four member team that lives and works together in close quarters throughout a shift. Living at the firehouse entails rigorous housekeeping, cooking, cleaning and yard maintenance. Teams may be diverse by gender and ethnicity, and each member is heavily dependent on fellow members to successfully perform the duties of the position.

Firefighting is twenty-four hour work done in shifts

## Education and Training

Some Community Colleges offer Fire Science degrees and/or certificates.

- Advanced First Aid Certificate and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certificate (contact the Sanger Fire Department for a "Healthcare Provider Course")
- Fire Service Related Courses (offered at Community Colleges)
- Emergency Medical Technician I Certification
- EMT - Paramedic Certification
- Fire Service Technology Courses (Fire Service A.A. Degree)

## Physical Fitness

In order to prepare for firefighting work, it is important to have and maintain a physical fitness program. While no one course of physical fitness will suite every individual, a physical regimen that stresses endurance and total body strength can assist in developing a level of physical preparedness that is needed to succeed in physical ability performance testing. It is recommended that you consult your private physician before starting any fitness program.

## Community Involvement

Applicants are not required to participate in extracurricular activities. However, participation in various types of community programs will establish an applicant's record of interest and motivation.

1. Volunteer Fire Service Work
  - Reserve Programs (check with your local fire department)
  - Auxiliary Programs (check with your local fire department)
  - Office of Emergency Services (OES)
  - California Conservation Corp. (CCC)
  - Fire Service Exploring Programs
  - Volunteer Community Services
  - Church Programs
  - Scout Troops
  - Community Organizations
  - Hospitals



## Selection Process

Most jurisdictions will distribute an examination announcement. To get specific information about a particular agency, contact their personnel office. The application and selection process will be described in the announcement, which will be published when a firefighter position opens. Most selection processes for entry-level firefighter consist of an application screening, a written exam, a physical ability test, and one or more oral interviews. A qualifying background investigation and a medical evaluation are usually required.

## What You Can Do to Prepare Now

Becoming a Firefighter often takes a great deal of long term preparation, self-motivation, and commitment. While there is no guarantee that any of the following activities will result in your selection as an entry-level Firefighter, experience has shown that participation in these types of activities has tended to distinguish outstanding candidates, and documents an applicant's interest in the position.