

So You Want to Be a Firefighter!

(Steps to becoming a firefighter*)

One of the first questions you need to answer is whether you plan on being a career (municipal firefighter, airport, industrial etc.) or volunteer firefighter.

If the answer is **volunteer**, the first step is **to join a fire department**. Membership in a volunteer fire department opens up a number of opportunities; the first of which is State sponsored firefighting training.



For those interested in "interior" firefighting, which, as the name implies, requires the training and skills to wear full turnout gear, Self-contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and the skills to perform the job which includes actually entering burning buildings, enrolling in the entry level training course, "Firefighter I" is the next step. Currently consisting of 28 classes totaling 90 hours, the Firefighter I program includes over 50 hands-on skills that must be acquired and demonstrated. Testing on all presented material is also part of the curriculum. Those who successfully complete this intensive program are rewarded with confidence that comes from a proficient knowledge base and hands-on training.

For those interested in being a part of the fire-ground activity but not necessarily interested in interior firefighting, registering for "Scene Support Operations" is your next step. The Scene Support training course consists of 9 classes of 3 hours each. Testing as well as "hands-on skills" more related to a support role - helping with laddering, deploying and re-packing hose lines, lighting, changing air cylinders on the SCBA – are skills addressed in this entry level training course.

After completing either of the "entrance level" formal training courses, the new member will then review the Standard Operating Procedures and rules and regulations with their respective fire departments.

For those who are looking toward a **career in firefighting**, the successful completion of a Civil Service firefighter exam is required in most cases. Check with your local government Civil Service Department for a listing of openings or upcoming civil service title tests. In many cases, "rank" on the list of potential appointees is determined based on the scores of the written test. Upon successful completion of the written test, potential candidates are also required to complete the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The CPAT is a practical exam used to test a candidate's physical ability to perform a job task related to firefighting. CPAT is a physically demanding test that requires a candidate to use his or her physical, mental abilities and, in some cases, balance. The CPAT involves eight events that must be completed in 10 minutes, 20 seconds.

Aspiring firefighters may want to consider enrolling in a Fire Science program to obtain an "Associates in Applied Science Degree" (AAS) in Fire Protection Technology. Locally, Monroe Community College (MCC) and Erie Community College (ECC) offer this program. The Fire Science program provides a tremendous base from which a person can build their career.

As individuals consider "fire" as a career, keep in mind that fire offers a wide range of specialties and vast opportunities after successful appointment. Specialized fields in training, fire inspections, sprinkler system design, apparatus design and maintenance, emergency planning, drills and exercise development, are just a few of the specialized areas, in addition to management positions and administrative roles.

FIREFIGHTER VOLUNTEER PATH	FIREFIGHTER CAREER PATH
Join a volunteer fire department.	Consider enrolling in a Fire Science degree program (AAS) at a local community college. When available, register for Civil Service Firefighter related testing with your County Civil Service Department.
Talk to your Fire Chief about your roll in the department.	
Call your County Fire Coordinator or Emergency Management Office to register for training classes.	

* Medical clearance is required for all career and volunteer firefighters.
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