



RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

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INTRODUCTION

This section provides basic guidelines for the process of selecting new staff for firefighting positions. The materials provided can be used in total or modified to suit the needs and procedures of each municipality. With the numbers of people now seeking employment in the fire service and in order to avoid later conflicts, it is very important to fully document your hiring procedure and make it available to all interested applicants. Copies of a Career Guide and the Physical Evaluation Standards Test, used by the department should also be available to potential candidates. It is suggested that consideration be given to submitting your process for evaluation by the Human Rights Commission for compliance with their legislation. All tests and procedures must not be biased against race or sex.

The hiring process usually follows a set sequence:

1. Advertising for position openings with an application date cutoff clearly stated.
2. A review of applications for eligibility as outlined in a Career Guide.
3. A Written Examination or Basic Fitness and Vision Evaluation or both for eligible candidates.
4. Successful candidates in the Written Examination and/or Basic Fitness and Vision Evaluation are invited to attend a full Physical Evaluation Standards Test.
5. Successful candidates are invited to attend an Interview.
6. Candidates with the highest scores in this final stage are hired in rank order providing they:
 - (a) Successfully pass health, medical and vision requirements based on the duties of a firefighter.
 - (b) Receive satisfactory comments from reference sources.
7. An eligibility list is created for a fixed period of time. Any additional job opportunities during that time period are filled from the rank order list providing the candidate:
 - (a) Meets the health, medical and vision requirements based on the duties of a firefighter.
 - (b) Receives satisfactory comments from reference sources.
8. Notification is sent to applicants to advise them of their status.

The guidelines provided in subsequent pages cover the following subject material:

1. Sample Hiring Procedure Statement
2. Sample Career Guide
3. Sample Physical Evaluation Standards Test

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Many departments utilize validated written examinations prepared by firms specializing in this field. These multiple choice tests usually reflect, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, a candidate's abilities and aptitudes in several important areas including understanding and following instruction, mathematics, memory, reasoning and problem solving. Some departments also use a psychological testing program prepared and marked by specialists in their field. These tests "flag" character or behavioural trends which should be explored during the Interview Process. This test is not recommended as a pass or fail criteria.

Specialists in the consulting field advising municipalities on hiring practices are indicating that the interview should be one of the most important segments in the hiring program. Less emphasis should be placed in numerical ranking in all of the pre-tests leading up to this segment. All tests and processes should be scaled to produce significant numbers of applicants for this final step. A panel of senior department staff assisted by human resources personnel from the municipality should share in the hiring decision based on the merits of each candidate's related aptitudes, education, background experience, communication skills and attitude.

The questions asked in the interview must be directly related to education, background experience and abilities of the person seeking employment. The goal is to have the candidate do most of the talking. Human Rights legislation clearly limits what can be discussed and a full understanding of your Provincial or Territorial Human Rights legislation is necessary in order to be aware of what can or cannot be explored during the very important interview process.

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SAMPLE HIRING PROCEDURE FOR THE POSITION OF FIREFIGHTER

1. Applicants are requested to read the Firefighters Career Guide for background information and details of eligibility.
2. Applicants are requested to fully complete a Firefighter application, attach copies of required documents as indicated on the application form and return prior to the time and date as advertised or instructed.
3. Applicants who meet the eligibility requirements will be invited to write a pre-employment test followed by a basic fitness evaluation. The tests will determine if a candidate has retained education and learning skills to meet the challenges of a new career, as well as having related fitness levels to carry out a firefighter's duties. Applicants will be notified **by mail** of appointment times.
4. All candidates that meet a benchmark level in both above tests will be invited to participate in a comprehensive Physical Evaluation Standards Test. Candidates will be notified **by mail** of the location and appointment time for this segment.
5. Candidates that meet or exceed the benchmark level of Physical Fitness will be invited to attend a personal interview. Notification of the interview location and appointment time will be **by mail**.
6. The successful candidates are selected as a result of a complete review of the results of all above tests, processes, background skills and related work experience. An eligibility list is created for appointment up to and including a specific cut-off date for the list. All candidates will be notified **by mail** regarding their results. The interview and final selection process takes from **one to two months** based on the number of candidates being processed.
7. A candidate selected from the list will be offered a position as a firefighter subject to the following conditions.
 - (a) receipt of satisfactory comments from reference sources.
 - (b) meeting satisfactory health and medical evaluations based on the duties of a firefighter.
8. Candidates selected from the eligibility list for appointment may be required to be retested in the Physical Evaluation Standards Test before they are appointed, if it is more than eight months from the time of the original test.

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SAMPLE CAREER GUIDE

The eligibility criteria for applying for a position with the Fire Department are minimal. To be eligible you must:

Be legally entitled to work in Canada (i.e. a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant or possess a valid work permit).

Possess the prescribed physical and visual abilities, with no significant abnormalities in colour vision, together with the capacity to handle intense and sustained physical effort.

Hold a valid provincial or territorial driver's licence with a good driving record and be capable of obtaining a classified licence to drive all emergency vehicles operated by the department **without restriction**.

Have graduated from Grade 12 or equivalent and understand and write English or French fluently depending on the operational language of the municipality.

FITNESS

While there are no height or weight restrictions, the arduous nature of the work requires good physical fitness, and a reasonable height to weight relationship is essential.

The firefighter's job calls for the stamina and agility of an athlete. When called to action, firefighters are required to produce bursts of energy often under great emotional stress, working long hours in extremes of heat and cold in a hostile and polluted environment. A firefighter must be capable of working at great heights and have the ability to climb and scale buildings utilizing ladders or ropes to rescue people or enter structures.

A candidate's sex, age, colour, race or religion are not factors in the selection process. The municipality is an equal opportunity employer and expects all staff and those seeking employment to be open and fair in their attitudes in dealing with colleagues and the public.

TECHNICAL AND MECHANICAL APTITUDE

It takes more than a fit and healthy body and an intelligent mind to be a firefighter. The term "master of many trades" is often linked in reference to the attributes of a competent firefighter. Most careers require knowledge or skills in one or two specific areas. Firefighters working in complex municipalities are faced with many special challenges that require them to be skilled in the theory and practice of many trades and professions.

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While individual acts of heroism on the part of a firefighter continues to save lives, it is increasingly evident that the difference of life or death at emergencies hinges on the fire-fighting team's skills using complex and specialized equipment under the pressure of the situation.

Whether it is working with auto extrication using high pressure hydraulic equipment, extinguishing fires using multi gallonage or pattern nozzles, or administering oxygen, or using resuscitators, firefighters receive ongoing training that ensures their competence.

Since the job demands the ability to analyze the layout of burning or collapsed buildings to check the spread of fire or locate victims and recognize the dangers of buckling walls and sagging floors, a firefighter must have or develop a knowledge and understanding of construction techniques.

Fire department staff are responsible for the safety of building occupants from the effects and spread of fire, the control of hazards and the maintenance of fire protection equipment as mandated in Fire Codes. They also inspect specific new residential and commercial and industrial properties for compliance with applicable sections of the Building Code that apply to fire safety and prevention.

The firefighter is trained to render first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation to the sick and injured with skilled gentleness.

THE LEARNING PROCESS NEVER ENDS

To become a successful firefighter, you must be a dedicated student. The firefighter participates in continuous in-service training. This education not only provides knowledge of the latest developments in a wide range of firefighting and rescue techniques, but also covers the handling and disposal of hazardous materials, emergency medical procedures, fire prevention legislation, and arson investigation techniques.

The firefighter uses teaching skills to pass this knowledge on to the public, promoting fire prevention and safety awareness.

In addition to frequent contact with the public, firefighters spend extended periods of time living and working together in the fire station environment. Whether it is sharing routine maintenance chores at the station, or providing backup at the scene of an emergency, firefighters must be able to accept orders without question, and work effectively as members of a team of professionals. Equally important is the capacity to assess a situation and act on their own initiative. Firefighters are frequently called upon to use their insight, training and judgement to rescue others and protect themselves.

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CHALLENGING SCREENING PROCEDURES

The screening process used in the selection of firefighter recruits is as physically and mentally demanding as the job itself. It has to be. Lives may depend on a firefighter's ability and courage. Not everyone has the unique stamina that is demanded.

The firefighter recruitment process may take a considerable length of time. From the time of completion of the application form to the time you are invited to attend tests or an interview with senior staff of the Fire Department and Human Resources Department, a period of several months may have elapsed. The results of this process could extend the final decision an additional two months before the successful candidates will be notified.

Candidates deemed not sufficiently qualified at any stage of the review process are not reconsidered until the next recruitment period. They must reapply and be tested again.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Testing is designed to create as closely as possible real life working conditions or demands. The work related agility tests, for example, involve carrying ladders and hose, which indicate a candidate's strength and endurance utilizing the tools and resources they are expected to use.

The inability to wear breathing apparatus or go into congested areas because of a fear of being confined (claustrophobia), or the inability to climb ladders because of a fear of heights (acrophobia) fails a candidate.

GENERAL INFORMATION

There is a probationary period in which the firefighter will undergo extensive recruit and in service training. If the individual fails to consistently meet performance expectations during this training period their employment may be terminated.

Firefighters work on a rotational shift basis in a two platoon system and are required to be members of the professional firefighters' association.

While the monetary and related benefits are attractive this is not the primary reason why so many people make the fire service a lifetime career. A great deal of personal satisfaction comes from helping others and contributing to the quality of life in a community. This is compounded by the feeling of self worth that comes from facing danger and the sense of camaraderie that follows after trusting a colleague with your life.

SAMPLE PHYSICAL EVALUATION STANDARDS TEST

The results of the tests outlined below will determine whether the candidate possesses the necessary physical attributes to carry out the duties of a firefighter without restriction.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

This exercise involves the wearing of a self contained breathing apparatus with the face mask blacked out. The candidate will be led into an area where obstacles will be arranged in a fashion to simulate the actual internal layout of a dwelling unit. The candidate, under supervision, will be expected to follow a predetermined route to the exit. The inability to wear breathing apparatus or a fear of confined spaces (claustrophobia) will fail the candidate.

WEIGHT CARRY

The candidate will carry a bulky mass of approximately 30 kg. over uneven ground. This portion of the test will relate to firefighter's duties, when required to carry equipment over and around obstacles such as debris at a fire scene.

LADDER CLIMB

Firefighters must have confidence and agility to ascend and descend ladders of all heights and sizes. The test involves climbing a ladder to a height of 12 metres, stepping off the ladder onto a roof, reversing the procedure, and descending the ladder to the ground. The candidate will be wearing a self contained breathing apparatus, minus the mask and will be protected by a safety rope. A fear of heights (acrophobia) will fail the candidate.

WEIGHT PULL

This exercise requires the candidate to pull aloft, to a height of 12 metres and hold suspended for one minute, a 15 m. length of rolled 65 mm. hose weighing approximately 32 kg. On a signal from the examiner the candidate will lower the hose slowly back to the ground. Coordinated arm, leg and back strength, manual dexterity and stamina are required for extending ladders, hoisting hose and equipment to higher elevations of a structure and rescue operations where rappelling is required.

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HOSE CARRY/CLIMB

This exercise will consist of carrying on the shoulder, a bundle of tied hose, approximately 30 m. in length, to a stairway. The candidate will then ascend by stairway to the fourth floor, exchange the bundle for a similar one and descend with hose to the starting position at the ground. Hand railings are available for candidate safety.

PUMPER EXTENSION LADDER HANDLING

This test requires the candidate to remove an 8 metre extension ladder from wall mounted ladder brackets, positioned at a height applicable to a pumper mounting, lay it on the floor then reverse the procedure returning the ladder to the wall brackets.

The proper lifting and lowering technique will be explained by the examiner.

There are occasions where it is necessary for an individual on their own to remove and place an extension ladder for rescue operations.

SEARCH CONFINED AREA (CLAUSTROPHOBIA TEST)

Wearing a blacked out facepiece, the candidate searches an unlighted, narrow, confined passageway and recovers a small object.

SIMULATED HOSE ADVANCE

The candidate drags a weighted sled a distance of 50 ft. (15.3 m.).

VICTIM DRAG

The candidate drags a 200 lb. (90.0 kg.) dummy a distance of 50 ft. (15.3 m.) weaving in and out of markers.