

Joining the Fire Service

A guide to a successful career

The Fire Service can be a very rewarding career where an individual will be given many chances to make a real difference in someone's life.

What do I need to do to become a Firefighter?

The answer is somewhat complex as different agencies have different priorities with different needs. All types of agencies are filled with professionals that are good at what they do and regardless of the variations; there can be a fair amount of crossover in skill sets. The key for you is finding the right "fit". Whichever path you follow, it is generally preferred that you obtain an Emergency Medical Certificate (EMT). While not always required, it will open the most doors for you.

General items that will help you get hired include:

- EMT
- Paramedic Certification (National Registry, State Certified, County Accredited)
- Fire Science classes (Community College)
- Experience (Obtained from reserve and volunteer programs)
- Firefighter 1 Academy or Wildland Fire Academy

Getting hired consists of more than simply passing the required written and manipulative exams; it also includes displaying character traits such as a positive work ethic, pleasant work demeanor, professional conduct and appearance, the lack of a sense of entitlement, as well as other similar attributes which help to gain and keep the public's confidence and trust.

The best candidate for hire has a balanced combination of education and experience. Education provides the introduction to a topic or skill, experience makes the education real, applicable, and a permanent part of your mental "toolbox". Firefighters are expected to continue education throughout their career to stay current with new trends in Training, Tactics, and Strategy.

The training program you are about to embark on provides both education and experience, and is not one of the easiest in the industry. You will be inundated with items that must be learned to keep you and your co-workers safe, while performing near the peak of your abilities. Once you have completed this program you will have increased confidence in your abilities, as well as those of your co-workers, that will give you a sense of pride in belonging to the Fire Service.

BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT

Today the fire service is composed of men and women of various ages with different educational backgrounds, work experience, and physical abilities. No matter what your



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background or your previous level of training; you are now in a position to learn. As a Fire Service student, it is important to remember that while you may have been a decision-maker in your former career, you are now in a position to follow orders and instructions from other people, so an appropriate attitude is essential.

As members of the Fire Service we expect our personnel to treat others with dignity and respect. Courtesy shall be accorded all officers, co-workers, and citizens. Chief Officers, Captains and staff are to be addressed by rank and last name or by rank only if last name is unknown. Civilians are to be addressed professionally, either using a proper title and their last name (i.e.: "Ms.", "Mr.", etc.) or ma'am, sir, etc.

Discipline and accountability are key parts of training. Due to the hazardous nature of the profession, lives may depend on the ability to respond immediately. All trainees shall respond to supervisors' orders. Disrespect, insubordination, or any conduct unbecoming a member of the Fire Service will make it very difficult to get hired.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

The Fire Service is a paramilitary organization that requires teamwork, discipline, and the ability to make decisions under pressure. If you do not like the idea of working under authority, self-discipline, or living with rules and regulations that restrict your personal freedom for the sake of public safety, you are in the wrong place.

As a Fire Service trainee, you are expected to obey orders, exhibit exceptional personal hygiene, conform to rules and regulations, respect the chain of command, work well with your peers, have integrity, and occasionally perform repetitious menial tasks with excellence. At the same time you should demonstrate the ability to think on your feet, use sound independent judgment, be aggressive, and display common sense concerning safety for yourself and others. As a trainee, you have taken on a tremendous commitment that requires your constant attention. It is essential that you understand your responsibilities so that you can work to achieve the highest level of performance possible.

To emphasize the high degree of public trust placed upon you by the citizens of this community, the professional behavior of the trainee will be evaluated throughout their training period. Any evidence of lying, cheating, or any type of dishonesty will result in a lack of ability to get hired in the industry. Professional behavior will be evaluated in terms of station duties, emergency work, training, personal traits, along with other characteristics. Any evidence of behavioral problems on the part of a Fire Service Trainee may result in a poor reference or recommendation for hire.



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The conduct of all Fire Service personnel shall be above reproach during all aspects of training, and throughout their careers. All members are responsible for regulating their conduct in a positive, respectful manner.

Cooperation and teamwork shall be emphasized to provide the community with the highest level of customer service. This applies to your actions on- and off-duty during your entire career in the fire service.

Compliance to grooming standards is another measure of a firefighter's professional attitude. Trainees may be inspected daily. At morning lineup, all personnel shall be attired in a clean work uniform in conformity with Fire Service Standards.

SAFETY

The firefighter's job is one of the most hazardous of all occupations. Trainee firefighters are trained to function in a safe and proficient manner that is consistent with the aggressive fire fighting nature of the Fire Service. Carelessness in any work routine drill or simulated emergency can result in serious injury or death. Therefore, safety violations will not be tolerated. Repeated failure to comply with safety policies, practices and procedures, and / or negligent acts, will result in difficulty in getting hired.

Although outlined in safety manuals, a particular program or a specific procedure does not solely represent safe practices. Safety is integrated within our organizational culture. You must be assertive and advocate for safe practices. If you believe something is wrong, or you are uncomfortable, be prepared to speak up. Overconfidence, resignation, or impulsive behaviors are sure to cause task failure or harm.

TEAMWORK

Safety means working together as a team. Teamwork creates a synergy where a company of firefighters working together can accomplish the tasks needed to mitigate an emergency in a safe manner. Safe fire ground operations demand company integrity and teamwork at all times.

While training, you will be evaluated as an individual and on your ability to operate effectively within a team. You must develop the ability to monitor the progress of your assigned task within the context of the overall objectives of a particular mission. Although many firefighting tasks are completed by an individual (i.e.: operating the chainsaw) they are usually done within a team assignment (i.e.: ventilation group). The work of one team may affect the work of another team. The interior team may need to delay their operation based on the expediency of vertical ventilation. Teamwork and cooperation determine the success or failure of any operation. As a means to develop this skill, fire trainees should work together at all times.



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The ability to communicate is a key element of an effective team member, as well as popular employment criteria. This can take many forms, including written verbal and non-verbal means. Good communication is best represented as a loop in which the sender transfers information, the receiver acknowledges receipt, and the sender then assures that the proper transfer has occurred. Be prepared to process complex situations and relay information as a clear concise package. As the receiver, be an active listener. Your understanding is often represented by your ability to paraphrase or add to the initial communication. The sender completes the process by confirming that the exchange is accurate and/or corrects any misunderstandings. Remember to listen and think before you speak.

Each member also has an obligation to the team to stay both mentally and physically prepared for maximum job performance. When climbing stairs in a multi-story building, the company is only as fast as the slowest member. The success of vehicle extrication is predicated on each member's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of vehicle construction. A firefighter who is mentally or physically deficient can slow down the entire company.

DISTRACTIONS

As a firefighter you are a problem solver. In our profession, much of our work is done in situations that are out-of-control. Therefore, firefighters must learn to control the things that they can (both professionally and personally). Make sure you have handled your personal dilemmas and distractions, as it is hard to be functional at work when you have a personal crisis hanging over your head.

If you are experiencing difficulties, consider approaching an officer for assistance or guidance before the difficulty becomes more serious. In many cases, the officers can assist you, and if they cannot, there are tools available to assist you. Addressing a potential problem early is always the best approach. If you provide details about an underlying issue as an excuse for poor performance after the fact, it would look like you were avoiding responsibility, which is not acceptable.

ADAPTABILITY / FLEXIBILITY

Emergency operations are dynamic. Although the initial plan of action must be produced quickly, you will also be evaluated for your ongoing situational awareness and adaptability. Standard operating procedures serve as an operational foundation; however, you may need to alter them based on changing conditions. Observe the situation, orientate yourself within the environment, consider your decision as the best option for a plan of action, and then act. These actions will be evaluated by their impact. You may find the need to alter tactics or procedures, and this process continues until the problem is fixed. Each event is a learning experience, no matter how simple or mundane, take the time afterwards to conduct an honest assessment of your actions.



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Cutting a ventilation hole on a roof with a chainsaw is a simple example of this process. There are a number of variations in roofing materials and construction, using one technique or cutting speed on all roofs will not work. You must learn what an effective cut feels, sounds and looks like. You must learn to adjust your cutting methods for each type of roof. You may be able to do a cut quickly in one situation but are obligated to do it slower and more deliberately in another; the outcome is the same for both, but the techniques are altered based on the situation.

RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTION/DIRECTION

You are in this training program to learn; ask questions. There is a lot to learn and asking questions is one of the best tools for learning. Volunteer to try new things. Take initiative when you see things that need to be done. As a trainee, it is understood that mistakes will be made while you are learning new skills; this is part of the learning process. If you make a mistake, admit it, take responsibility for it, correct it, and move on to the next challenge.

You are evaluated not only by your initial abilities, but also by your capacity to respond to correction and redirection appropriately.

LEADERSHIP

At times during the training program you will be expected to take a leadership role. Even as a Trainee, you should be able to demonstrate skills in coordinating resources and personnel. All firefighters are expected to be able to use logical and sound judgment to make decisions based on available information.

VARIANCES IN EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

As you proceed through this training program you may be exposed to different methods of accomplishing work or doing skills. These variations become “tools in your mental tool box”. In the Fire Service there is not necessarily one way to do things so learn each of the variations you are exposed to as it will make a stronger, better skilled firefighter.

ATTITUDE

All of the items mentioned come down to a proper Attitude. A proper attitude is EVERYTHING. Agencies look for individuals with a good attitude toward learning in addition to a great work ethic.



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CAREER PATH

Miramar College is now working with the Heartland Fire Training Authority, The San Diego County Fire Authority, CAL-FIRE and others to present a career path that offers both education and experience. While this is not the only method of entry – many agencies have excellent reserve programs – Miramar is working with the San Diego County Fire Authority on a plan to provide seamless training for everyone interested in the Fire Service. Regardless of the path you decide to take, this will make you a strong contender for a job over others that take a different path.

The following pages show several semester plans, full time and part time, to help you plan your education. This is followed by sample resumes that approximate your completion benchmarks while gaining more education and experience.

This guide is the result of a joint effort by Miramar College, the San Diego County Fire Authority, CAL-FIRE, and the Heartland Fire Training Authority. These agencies are working in collaboration to create a multi-agency approach to training, with more agencies joining on a consistent basis. As such, this is a living document which will be updated on a regular basis.

If you desire more information on the Fire Service as a career, please contact these agencies or your local Fire Department for more information.



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FULL TIME INVESTMENT/SCHOOL 5 semesters

Program information: <http://www.miramarfiretechnology.com>

Enroll at Miramar College FIPT Program: www.sdmiramar.edu

STEP 1 - Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses:

1st Semester

EMGM 105A EMT	6 units
FIPT 101 Fire Protect Org (ICS 100/200/700/800)	3 units
FIPT 110 Wildland (S-130, S-190, L-180)	3 units
FIPT 150A Manipulative Skills (Structure)	1.5 units
FIPT 306A CS Rescue Awareness (CSFM Cert)	.5 units
FIPT 308B HAZMAT FRO (CSTI Cert)	1 unit
Total	15 units

STEP 2 – after completion of semester apply to SDCFA Volunteer, Submit certifications
<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/sdcfa/>

STEP 3 – Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses, and begin SDCFA Volunteering. Get Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

2nd Semester

College Work experience	(Units Vary)
FIPT 102 Fire Prevention	3 units
FIPT 103 Fire Equipment and Systems	3 units
FIPT 104 Building Construction	3 units
FIPT 105 Fire Behavior	3 units
FIPT 107 Tactics and Strategy	3 units
Total	15 Units

STEP 4 – Attend CSFM FF 1 Accredited Regional Fire Academy

3rd Semester

FF1 Academy	9 units
FIPT 109 Fireground Hydraulics	3 units
Total	12 Units

STEP 5 – Take SDCFA DO required Courses. SDCFA Volunteer experience

4th Semester

CSFM Driver Operator 1A	2 units
CSFM Driver Operator 1B	2 units
CSFM Command 1A	2 units
CSFM Command 1B	2 units
CSFM Command 1C	2 units
Total	10 Units

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STEP 6— Interview to become a SDCFA DO. Continue SDCFA Volunteer program, gaining experience. Obtain the remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes.

Stay Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

5th Semester

Complete General Ed. Classes to obtain an Associate's Degree

CSFM Instructor 1A	2 units
CSFM Instructor 1B	2 units
CSFM Investigation 1A	2 units
CSFM Management 1	2 units
CSFM Fire Prevention 1	2 units
ICS 300	1 units
Total	11 Units



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PART TIME INVESTMENT/SCHOOL 9 semesters

Program information: <http://www.miramarfiretechnology.com>

Enroll at Miramar College FIPT Program: www.sdmiramar.edu

STEP 1 - Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses:

1st Semester

EMGM 105A EMT	6 units
FIPT 101 Fire Protect Organ (ICS 100/200/7800/800)	3 units
Total	9 units

STEP 2 - Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses:

<http://www.miramarfiretechnology.com/Miramarfiretechnology/Welcome.html>

2nd Semester

FIPT 110 Wildland (S-130, S-190, L-180)	3 units
FIPT 150A Manipulative Skills (Structure)	1.5 units
FIPT 306A CS Rescue Awareness (CSFM)	.5 units
FIPT 308B HAZMAT FRO (CSTI)	1 unit
Total	6 units

STEP 3 – after completion of semester apply to SDCFA Volunteer, Submit certifications

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/sdcfa/>

STEP 4 – Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses, and begin SDCFA

Volunteering. Get Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

3rd Semester

College Work experience	(Units Vary)
Two of the remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Total	7 units

STEP 5– Enroll in the following Miramar College FPIT courses, and continue SDCFA

Volunteering. Stay Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

4th Semester

Three of the remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Total	9 Units

STEP 6– Attend CSFM FF 1 Accredited Regional Fire Academy

5th Semester

FF1 Academy	9 units
Remaining FIPT classes	3 units
Total	12 Units



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STEP 7 – Take SDCFA DO required Courses. SDCFA Volunteer experience

Stay Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

6th Semester

CSFM Driver Operator 1A	2 units
CSFM Driver Operator 1B	2 units
Total	4 Units

STEP 8 – Take SDCFA DO required Courses. SDCFA Volunteer experience

7th Semester

CSFM Command 1A	2 units
CSFM Command 1B	2 units
CSFM Command 1C	2 units
Total	6 Units

STEP 9– Interview to become a SDCFA DO. Continue SDCFA Volunteer program, gaining experience. Obtain the remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes

Stay Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

8th Semester

Complete General Ed. Classes to obtain an Associate’s Degree	
Remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes	3 units
Remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes	3 units
Total	9 Units

STEP 10– Interview to become a SDCFA DO. Continue SDCFA Volunteer program, gaining experience. Obtain the remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes

Stay Involved in SDCFA Special Projects and assignments.

9th Semester

Complete General Ed. Classes to obtain an Associate’s Degree	
Three of the remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes	3 units
Remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes	3 units
Remaining CSFM Fire Officer classes	3 units
Total	7 Units



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These are the current degree tracts through Miramar College

MIRAMAR Community College FIPT Program May 23 2013

<http://www.miramarfiretechnology.com/Miramarfiretechnology/Welcome.html>
[Fire Technology Degree or Certificate](#)

- EMGM 105A Emergency Medical Tech
- FIPT 101 Fire Protection Organization
- FIPT 102 Fire Prevention Technology
- FIPT 103 Fire Protection Equipment and Systems
- FIPT 104 Building Construction for Fire Protection
- FIPT 105 Fire Behavior and Combustion
- FIPT 107 Fire Fighting Tactics and strategy
- FIPT 109 Fire Service Hydraulics
- FIPT 110 Wildland Fire Behavior
- FIPT 150A Introduction to Fire Suppression and Manipulative skills

Ca. State Fire Marshal Fire Officers Courses May 23 2013

http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/training/pdf/Topic%20Letters/2013-2-12_Fire_Officer_Cert_Changes-REVISED.PDF

Fire Officers Certification

- Command 1A
- Fire Command 1B
- Command 1C
- Training Instructor 1A
- Training Instructor 1B
- Fire Investigation 1A
- Fire Management 1
- Fire Prevention 1
- ICS 300



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Other Classes and Self Study

ONLINE only

<http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.aspx>

IS-100.b <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-100.b>

IS-200.b <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-200.b>

IS-700.A <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-200.b>

IS-800.B <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/courseOverview.aspx?code=IS-800.b>

<http://training.nwcg.gov/courses.html>

I-100 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/i100.html>

S-110 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/s110.html>

S-190 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/s190.html>

S-260 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/s260.html>

S-290 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/s290.html>

Blended course

S-130 <http://training.nwcg.gov/courses/s130.html>



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Sample Resume After 1st year

EXPERIENCE

2013 SDCFA Volunteer Firefighter San Diego, CA

EDUCATION

Miramar College A.S. Degree (In Progress) Fire Protection Technology

High School 2012 High School Diploma

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

EMT, SD Co.	CSFM Volunteer	NWCG I-100
CPR/AED	Firefighter	NWCG S-110
HAZMAT FRO	IS-100.b	NWCG S-190
Confined space Rescue	IS-200.b	NWCG S-130
Awareness	NIMS IS-700.A	
	NIMS IS-800.B	

PROJECTS, ORGINIZATIONS, CLUBS

1. Station 24 shift Scheduler
2. Assist in Training other volunteers



Sample Resume After 3 years

EXPERIENCE

SDCFA Volunteer

San Diego, CA

2013 Volunteer Firefighter Trainee
2014 Volunteer Firefighter, CSFM FF 1
2015 Volunteer Driver Operator

EDUCATION

Miramar College A.S. Degree (In Progress) Fire Protection Technology
Miramar College **Fire Protection Technology Certificate**
High School 2012 High School Diploma

SPECIALIZED TRAINING

EMT, SD Co.	IS-100.b	CSFM FF1 Heartland Academy
CPR/AED	IS-200.b	#25
HAZMAT FRO	NIMS IS-700.A	
Confined space Rescue	NIMS IS-800.B	CSFM Driver Operator 1A
Awareness	NWCG I-100	CSFM Driver Operator 1B
CSFM Volunteer Firefighter	NWCG S-110	CSFM Command 1A
Water Point Tech. Spec.	NWCG S-190	CSFM Command 1B
	NWCG S-130	CSFM Command 1C
		ICS 300

PROJECTS, ORGINIZATIONS, CLUBS

1. Station 24 shift Scheduler
2. Assist in Training volunteers
3. Station 24, 2014 Boot Drive coordinator
4. Station 24 Station Manager



Appendix A – Career Path

