

FIRE CAREER ASSISTANCE

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How Do I Find Out Which Fire Departments Are Accepting Applications/Hiring ?

Finding fire departments that are hiring can be as difficult as finding a needle in a hay stack if you don't have the right contacts. Too many qualified candidates miss out on their dream of becoming a fire fighter because they simply do not know who is hiring, when the application deadlines are or what a particular department is looking for. Take the guess work and news paper ads out of the picture let the experts tell you where to go and how to get it done. Don't be one of those "I always wanted to be a fireman", join the team that will open the doors to your dream so you can say "I am a fireman". You must take responsibility for yourself, stay ahead of the pack and be responsive!

There are many ways to find fire departments, but don't waste your valuable time heading down dead end paths or missing the boat. There is no single method that is the best and Fire Career Assistance does not claim to have every job opportunity throughout the 16 western states and Florida, but neither can any other similar service. However, Fire Career Assistance does have one of the largest Firefighter/EMS job postings for immediate action. FCA gives you the tools you'll need to make the application process easy, by providing the Fire Departments H/R mailing addresses and web sites for departments that are hiring and we do this every month. Again no other service offers this! Our service delivers all the information and tools you need with very little effort and even less money. Why continue using costly services that don't provide you with the latest job postings, web site links, mailing addresses, testing tips and advice from professionals when Fire Career Assistance does?

The information that follows will assist you in developing a road map for success by utilizing the job announcements, web sites and mailing addresses. Remember, these active methods are not a waste of your time or money! They should be considered another "tool in your toolbox" to assist you in your pursuit of becoming a firefighter.

I want to stress the importance of not relying just on one method of finding out which fire departments are accepting applications; but by actually having a game plan that will guide you from point A to point B, and so forth. Becoming a firefighter is rarely accomplished without an action plan of goals and objectives to get you there. You wouldn't set out on a cross-country trip without a road map, would you? Why should this process be any different?

WHY DO THIS?

The reason you are doing this is to start your own data base of fire departments within your geographical region. It is going to be your template for conducting future researches. This list will become your "Master List" of fire departments that are found within a 50 mile radius of your residence. Once you have completed the counties and cities that are within that radius, it will then be time to expand your search to the counties and cities that are within 100 miles of your residence, then 150 miles, and then 200 miles. I would also suggest listing "big-city or large fire departments" that are out of the 200 mile radius. The reason why is because it might be worth your time and effort to drive or fly to take a test that is 500 miles away if there are plans to hire a lot of firefighters, open up new fire stations in growing areas.

Are you thinking this is a waste of time or too much work? First of all, it is not a waste of time. Think back to the need to be proactive. Do you want to be in charge of your own destiny, or do you want someone else to be? I would rather have myself be in charge. That way, I have no one to blame but myself. Also, think of it as a way to educate your self in your local and regional geography. Testing to become a firefighter took me to places I probably never would have ventured to otherwise, and it really educated me as to what cities and counties are within the State of California. Remember, knowledge is power. You never know when that information might be useful in the future. By building this data base now, it will help narrow your focus in the future, thus allowing you to save time and also concentrate on other areas.

HOW THIS CONCEPT WILL BE BROKEN UP:

- Phase 1 - Developing your firefighter candidate research binder
- Phase 2 - Organizing your firefighter candidate research binder into chapters
- Phase 3 - Obtaining the necessary information for your firefighter candidate research binder

GETTING STARTED:

To be proactive, it is going to take some time and some energy, and I suggest you start by doing the following items:

Phase 1: Developing your firefighter candidate research binder

A. Obtain the necessary tools and equipment.

To do this properly, you will need the following items that are available from any office supply store (you might even already have them):

- One two-inch binder
- Blank ruled paper, 8 x 11
- Section dividers
- Pens / pencils to write with

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B. Get a map of the state you live in and any adjacent states or states you are interested in. Start out by penciling in a dot, which will designate where you live. Then take a ruler and go up to the legend that tells you how many miles each inch equals. This is the time to find out how serious you are with the testing process - how much you are willing to do, or how far you are willing to go to get a badge. Find out how many inches equal 50 miles, 100 miles, 150 miles, and 200 miles. Once you have that information, start drawing a circle around your residence (the dot you initially penciled in) to designate a radius of 50, 100, 150, and 200 miles around your residence. This is how you are going to start your search.

C. Start with the 50 miles that are closest to your residence.

On a piece of paper, write down each of the counties that are within that 50 mile radius, starting with the one you live in and then working outwards. On another sheet of paper, write the name of the county, and then list each city that is found within that county (alphabetical order) on the left side of the page. On the right side of the page, write the words "Fire Department." Then go to the next closest county, writing the name of that county down in addition to each of the cities found within that county. Do this for the 50 miles closest to your residence.

D. What your information will look like:

For example, I live in Santa Clara County. I would write the following information down in the following format:

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

CITY:

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Campbell

Cupertino

Gilroy

Los Altos

Los Altos Hills

Los Gatos

Milpitas

Monte Sereno

Morgan Hill

Mountain View

Palo Alto

San Jose

San Martin

Santa Clara

Saratoga

Sunnyvale

Take the next closest county and do the same. There are about seven other counties that are within 50 miles of my residence. Guess what, I would need to then list out those seven other counties and include every city or town found within those counties.

I showed you how to start your research by getting a binder, and blank sheets of paper. I had you start by drawing a 50 mile radius around your residence, and then 100, 150, and 200 mile radius markings around your residence. I then had you list out

county-by-county, each city that was within that county, within the 50 mile radius closest to your house. Now we will continue developing your testing data base to assist you in finding out when a fire department will be accepting applications.

You will end up with a binder having 3 Chapters as follows;

Chapter 1 - Fire Departments: County-by-county

Chapter 2 - Fire Departments: City-by-city

Chapter 3 - Action plan / to-do list

Phase 2: (Organizing your firefighter candidate research binder into chapters)

A. Chapter 1: Fire Departments County-by-County.

Label your first section Chapter 1. This chapter will contain information on the cities within each county, and who provides the fire protection services. We now need to find out which Fire Departments are providing service within each county. How do we do this? We start by going to the local library. Every public library I have been to has a section of phone books, from the local area, throughout the state, and nationwide. Find a comfortable table and get the phone books from the first county you are going to research.

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Let's say your first county is Santa Clara County. In the front of most phone books are the blue pages, which are the government pages. Each city and county has listings in the blue sections, and is listed alphabetically. Here is where you will need to look, city by city, for the words fire department. If there is a fire department in that city, you will usually find the business phone number, in addition to the address of their headquarters.

For example, the City of Campbell is covered by the Santa Clara County Fire Department. The address and business phone numbers are listed there. Now on your sheet of paper that you have started by listing the name of the county and the cities within that county, to the right of the City of Campbell, write Santa Clara County Fire Department in the space under Fire Dept. In the blue pages, if you continue to the City of Cupertino, you will see they are also protected by the Santa Clara County Fire

Department, so put the same information in the space provided. Gilroy is your next city, and they have their own fire department, so write Gilroy Fire Department in the space to the right. Let's assume we've gone through the phone book for the whole county, and that here is the information we have discovered:

In theory, you should have anywhere from one county up to maybe 15 counties (or more, depending on how ambitious or motivated you are) listed in alphabetical order in Chapter 1.

Santa Clara County
CITY:
FIRE DEPARTMENT:
Campbell
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Cupertino
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Gilroy
Gilroy Fire Department
Los Altos
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Los Altos Hills
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Los Gatos
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Milpitas
Milpitas Fire Department
Monte Sereno
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Morgan Hill
Santa Clara County Fire Department
Mountain View
Mountain View Fire Department
Palo Alto
Palo Alto Fire Department
San Jose
San Jose Fire Department
San Martin
South Santa Clara County F.P.D. / CDF
Santa Clara
Santa Clara Fire Department
Saratoga
Saratoga Fire District / Santa Clara Co. Fire
Sunnyvale
Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety

B. Chapter 2: Fire Departments City-by-City

Label the second chapter of your binder, Chapter 2. Now that we have found out which fire departments are in the county, we can now narrow our research down. Based on the Santa Clara County example above, I will start with the Santa Clara Co. FD. Why? Because if you notice, they provide service to the cities/towns of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, and portions of Saratoga. I can just write Santa Clara Co. FD. on the top of the page and list the cities that they provide services to. That way, I don't have to phone/look up web site/etc. each of those cities individually, I can just contact the Santa Clara County Fire Department. Now you can write out individual pages for each city or fire department, but I would suggest creating a template (or using the sample I have provided), making copies of it to put into chapter 2.

NOTE: The testing process for firefighters for most county fire departments is usually done through the County Personnel / Human Resource offices, just like with municipal fire departments. However, in the case of Santa Clara County, the Fire Department Personnel Office handles the testing process.

Because you will be listing fire departments in various counties, I would suggest separating this Chapter with dividers of the Counties that you are concentrating on, in alphabetical order. For example, since I live in San Jose, I would initially concentrate

on the following counties: Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco, San Benito, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, and probably Marin. That is a lot of different counties. Putting them in alphabetical order with a divider, starting with Alameda, would make my life easier. Then within each county, I would list the fire departments in alphabetical order.

Here is a sample form I suggest that you use. I feel it covers a majority of the information that a candidate would need to be one of the best prepared candidates. You can print this or copy and past it into a format you would like

SAMPLE FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION TEMPLATE

Fire Department Name: _____

Headquarters Address: _____

F.D. Website Address: _____

Business Phone Number: _____

Cities / Communities served: _____

Population Served: _____

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION:

Personnel / Human Resource Office:

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Job Line: _____

City / County web site: _____

Utilize Cooperative Personnel Services (CPS) or Firehire for testing? _____

Testing process consists of (check all that apply): written test: _____ oral interview: _____

Physical ability test: _____ Background investigation: _____ Chief's interview: _____

Medical Examination: _____ Polygraph: _____ Psychological Examination: _____

Other: _____

Minimum Requirements for firefighters: _____

Last tested: _____ # hired off last list: _____ Next test? _____

Present vacancies: _____ Projected future vacancies: _____

Length of Academy: _____ Length of probation: _____

STAFFING:

Fire Chief: _____

Deputy Chiefs: #: _____ Names / Divisions overseen:

Assistant Chiefs: #: _____ Names / Divisions overseen:

Division Chiefs: #: _____ Names / Divisions overseen:

Battalion Chiefs: #: _____ Suppression: _____ Administrative:

of Captains: _____ # of Lieutenants: _____ # of Engineers: _____ # of Firefighters: _____

Volunteer or Reserve Firefighter program? _____ # of Vol / Res FF's: _____

Requirements: _____

Their role: _____

of Fire Prevention Bureau personnel: _____ Fire Prevention positions: _____

Fire Investigation duties handled by: _____

Public Education duties handled by: _____

OPTIONAL - OPTIONAL USE - NOT REQUIRED INFORMATION - MISCELLANEOUS

Type of area served by the fire department: _____

Future stations planned? _____

Busiest Station: _____

Level of EMS provided: _____ ALS Engines? _____ ALS Trucks? _____

Ambulance Transport provided by: _____

Total Calls last year: _____ EMS: _____ Fire: _____ Other: _____

I.A.F.F. Union Local #: _____ Name of Union President: _____

APPARATUS

of Stations: _____ # of Engine Companies: _____ # of Truck Companies: _____

of Ambulances: _____ # of Rescue Companies: _____ # of Battalions: _____

of Haz Mat units: _____ Other specialized equipment: _____

STAFFING

Engines: _____ Trucks: _____ Rescues: _____ Other: _____

Minimum # of personnel on duty each shift: _____

Total # of personnel: _____ # of uniformed: _____ # of civilian: _____

(Be careful when asking these questions. It is better to find this information via a web site or third party such as HR)

WAGE & BENEFIT INFORMATION

Type of Retirement System: _____ Retirement Formula: _____

Retirement contribution: Paid by Department? _____ Paid by employee? _____

Medical Benefits: Paid by Department? _____ Paid by employee? _____

Entry Salary: _____ Top step Firefighter Salary: _____ Years to top step: _____

EMT incentive? _____ Paramedic incentive? _____ Uniform Allowance? _____

Type of shift worked: _____

KEY POINT:

I would suggest making multiple copies of this form, punching 3 holes in them, and placing the blank copies in Chapter 2 since these will be your worksheets when you contact fire departments and personnel departments.

Feel free to modify this template as you find necessary. You may even think of many other relevant items to include when doing your research.

Phase 3: Obtaining the necessary information for your firefighter candidate research binder.

To obtain the necessary information, utilize your publications provided by Fire Career Assistance, etc. Fill in the blanks with current job opening announcements and if interested contact them immediately for an application and further testing information.

Then review the Reference addresses provided each month and fill in the information. Also in your monthly publications FCA lists Reference web sites to acquire the information needed or to gather additional information. Each month FCA provides new information for your research or you can purchase the CD for the specific areas you are interested in (See web site at www.firecareerassist.com). Once you have this information in your binder you no longer require a service like ours. You can take the search on yourself possibly saving you money.

C. Chapter 3 - Action plan / to-do list

Step 1. If you find a job posted in our publication or online that you are interested in and qualified, contact them immediately. Request an application; fill it out by typing it or using black ink. Answer all the questions and use proper penmanship! Mail out your applications immediately, this way you do NOT miss the deadline.

Step 2. Review the web sites of fire departments or cities you are interested in. Check to make sure you have not missed a job posting. Look under the human resources section to see if they offer job notification services, job announcement services, contact lists or notification cards. Many cities offer these types of services and will contact you when an opportunity arises. Finally, gather any additional information you may need to fill in the information forms.

Step 3. If you were unable to find a current job opening or be places on a notification list. Use the information you have acquired and send out interest letters, telling them about yourself, requesting hiring information and asking them if they can notify you of the next testing opportunities or job posts.

Step 4. Call, write or visit the Fire Chief, or station captain. Introduce yourself and ask them if any scheduled hiring's are coming up. Often they will have the inside scoop. This can be beneficial in getting to know the staff of the interested department and you never know who might end up on an interview panel.

Step 5. Finally do not exclude contacting state hiring services, checking news paper ads, magazines, schools or word of mouth. This should not be necessary if you utilize the above steps properly and check in regularly.

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