

# The Job of a Firefighter...

As the name implies, Firefighters are involved in fire suppression operations. However, this is only one aspect of the job. Most Fire Departments also provide Emergency Medical Service (EMS). Seventy-five percent (75%) of the calls firefighters respond to are for emergency medical care. The emergency calls include motor vehicle accidents, heart attacks, strokes, home accidents, and drownings. When not responding to emergency calls, firefighters are involved in a variety of other activities. Below is just a small list of the many programs and activities firefighters perform on a daily basis while on-duty:

- Training
- Emergency Preparedness
- Community Education
- Fire Prevention Activities
- Public Service Work
- Building Inspections
- Personal Development
- Station and Apparatus Maintenance

**Work Shift:** Firefighters normally work 24-hour shifts. Work begins at 8:00 AM (0800) and ends at 8:00 AM (0800) the next morning. Firefighters normally work ten (10) shifts per month.

**Physical Requirements:** Firefighting is a physically demanding profession. A physical ability test is used to identify candidates who meet the basic physical requirements for the job. The physical ability is a pass/fail test. A series of eight (8) physical tasks are performed. The tasks are determined by specific job requirements that are required of a firefighter on the fire-ground. Applicants will wear a helmet; gloves, and 50 pound vest. The test is timed and candidates must complete the course within the established time standard of 10 minutes and 20 seconds (10:20).

**Age:** Applicants normally must be at least 21 years of age by the closing date of the recruitment period. Some volunteer fire departments allow applicants to be 18 years of age.

**Education:** Each fire department has their own individual educational requirements. However, most require graduation from high school or GED. Some require successful completion of Fire Science College coursework including an Associates Degree, or previous firefighting experience or certification. In some cases you must already be an Emergency Medical Technician and/or Certified Paramedic.

**Vision:** (NFPA Standard 1582) Far visual acuity shall be at least 20/30 binocular, corrected with contact lenses or spectacles. Far visual acuity uncorrected shall be at least 20/100 binocular for wearers of hard contacts or spectacles. Visual field performance without correction shall be 140 degrees in the horizontal meridian in each eye. Candidates who have had or intend to have ophthalmologic procedures such as radial keratotomy, or Lasik, will be subjected to the same standard.

**Driver's License:** Must possess a valid State Driver's License by hire date, and must have maintained a good driving record. A non-CDL class "B" license is normally required.

*For information on Harper College's AAS Degree in Fire Science Technology, contact Professor Samuel A. Giordano Jr., Program Coordinator, 1200 West Algonquin Road, Palatine, Il., 60067, 847-925-6379.*