



# SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN FIRE DISTRICT

## Firefighter Job Preview

### **FIREFIGHTER JOB PREVIEW**

Thank you for your interest in a career in the fire service. Being a firefighter is a very selfless, yet an exceptionally satisfying, profession. A career in the fire service can be as challenging as it is rewarding. Firefighting involves work that can be both extremely physically hard and mentally demanding, but very few professions can boast that this is the best job in the world!

In order to help you properly evaluate whether a career in the fire service is right for you, we wanted to give you a realistic preview into the job of a firefighter.

As a firefighter with the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District (Metro Fire), you will be required to perform a wide variety of tasks. These tasks are very diverse and may include rescue and care of victims, fire prevention, clean-up, hazardous materials containment, community service, and many others.

We urge you to consider the entire job of firefighter and not just the exciting or glamorous aspects. What follows is a realistic preview of the types of tasks which are required of all Metro Fire firefighters. It is intended to give you a better understanding of the job so you can decide whether you are really willing and able to perform the job on a daily basis. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to describe every task required to be a firefighter. Please take a moment to truly consider whether this job fits you, as well as whether you fit the job of firefighter.

### **FIRE ACADEMY AND PROBATION**

The physical and mental demands of firefighting are sometimes underestimated; and therefore, many applicants are overwhelmed by the challenging examination process involved in the testing of new recruits in the academy and during the probation process.

Upon hire, Recruit Firefighters begin their employment at Metro Fire with a 16-week Fire Academy. The Fire Academy is a fast-paced, high intensity program with a comprehensive curriculum that is both academically and physically rigorous. The mission of the Fire Academy is to train recruits with the knowledge, skills, and physical conditioning necessary to perform basic firefighting, emergency medical, and rescue duties, while instilling values, work habits, and discipline expected of a firefighter. The Academy imparts a culture emphasizing life-long maintenance of physical fitness, teamwork, professionalism and personal accountability within the framework of a chain of command.

Recruits that successfully complete the Fire Academy are appointed as Probationary Firefighters for a 12-month period. During this period Probationary Firefighters are routinely assigned to the busiest fire companies for further training and probationary evaluations.

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Emergency Response calls come in at any time of the day or night and require immediate response. Sleep may be frequently interrupted. Emergency calls can cover anything—structural fires, grass/brush fires, automobile accidents, life threatening and non-life threatening medical calls and false alarms. All must be responded to with the same speed and professionalism.



# SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN FIRE DISTRICT

## Firefighter Job Preview

Upon arrival on a fire scene, firefighters must quickly size-up the situation, including: scene safety, property type involved, location and extent of the fire, need for victim rescue, chance of fire spreading to other structures, etc. Firefighters then work together as a team in a coordinated effort to mitigate the incident.

On a medical emergency scene, firefighters are responsible for gathering information from the patient(s), bystanders, or other sources, developing a treatment plan, and coordinating the efforts of all personnel on scene to provide care to those in need.

### **FIRE SCENES**

Firefighters must enter burning structures, and once inside the structure, must search for victims, the source of fire, and ways to extinguish it. In this process, firefighters are exposed to extreme heat, smoke and gases and often come into contact with hazardous and infectious materials.

Firefighting is very physically demanding. Firefighters might need to carry 80-100 lbs. of equipment such as hoses, axes, ladders, chain saws and extinguishers into and around the fire scene to rescue victims and extinguish the fire. Firefighters make forced entries into grounds and structures by cutting locks or breaking doors/windows as needed. This may involve using hand tools such as axes, halligans and sledge hammers or power tools such as chain saws and rotary saws. In order to get hoselines to the seat of the fire, firefighters hoist, carry, or drag hose into place.

While at a fire scene, firefighters must constantly evaluate personal safety by examining the structure for cracks, breaks, charring or partial collapse. Firefighters are also responsible for salvage operations and often need to carry burnt furniture, clothing, appliances, etc. from buildings to reduce fire and smoke damage. Firefighters scoop, shovel, sweep and mop excess water and debris caused by the fire and firefighting efforts. They also tear down or shore-up weak or dangerous parts of fire structures such as floors, roofs or overhangs.

Firefighting is a dangerous job and firefighters are always at risk of being overcome by smoke or being burned while working to put the fire out.

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT**

Most Firefighters now function in a dual role performing the job of both a Firefighter and a Paramedic or an EMT. At Metro Fire, the current hiring practice is to hire only those Firefighters who also possess a Paramedic license. Firefighter/Paramedics provide pre-hospital emergency medical and trauma care which includes a patient assessment and, when appropriate, treatment aimed at stabilizing a patient so that he or she may be transported to a hospital or trauma center for more definitive care.

Firefighter/Paramedics are allowed to administer oral and intravenous medications. Additionally, when necessary, they can intubate patients, perform cricothyrotomy, needle chest decompression and other advanced medical procedures.

Care of the sick and injured will require physical contact with patients who will often be bleeding from open wounds and/or broken bones and other severe injuries. In the course of their duties,



# SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN FIRE DISTRICT

## Firefighter Job Preview

Firefighter/Paramedics can also be exposed to bloodborne and airborne pathogens putting their own health in jeopardy.

Firefighter/Paramedics may also come into contact with victims who have died before they could be rescued. Sometimes victims will die despite the best efforts of firefighters.

### **PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Firefighters work 24 hour consecutive shifts, living at the station the entire shift. At Metro Fire, shifts are organized as follows: two twenty-four hour shifts on, followed by four days off. While on-duty, firefighters live and sleep in dormitory-style quarters. Most stations do not have any physical barriers separating male and female facilities, including bathing and toilet areas. Firefighters pay for their meals while on-duty. They also assist in food preparation and cleanup.

Firefighters are expected to volunteer to work overtime (extra shifts), and occasionally may be required to work mandatory overtime. Firefighters may be away from home for days at a time during severe emergency situations.

Firefighters work on holidays. Should your shift fall on a holiday, you will be expected to work at the station over the holiday period. Firefighters must work during unusual and/or catastrophic events such as major wildland fires, earthquakes, floods, or civil unrest.

The duties and equipment of firefighting make special demands on the physical attributes of firefighters. Personal preference for hair length, nail length, jewelry, etc. may be overruled for firefighter safety.

The Fire Service is a paramilitary organization. Firefighters operate under a rank with an established chain of command. Operating within the chain of command and demonstrating respect for authority are of great importance in to the fire service. On the fireground, firefighters receive orders which must be carried out promptly and without question. On prompt execution of such orders may depend the safety of yourself and your crew.

Lastly, the Fire Service has earned a reputation of being one of the most trusted professions in the community in part due to the commitment of its members to hold themselves and each other to a higher standard. Exemplary character qualities are held in the highest regard among this group of individuals. The fire Service shares a similar list of core values. At Metro Fire they are Integrity, Professionalism, Teamwork, and Service Before Self.

### **Works Cited**

"The Firefighter Job Preview." [www.cherryhill-nj.com](http://www.cherryhill-nj.com). Cherry Hill Fire Department. Web. n.d.