

Do You Have What It Takes?



CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTER
JOINT APPRENTICESHIP COMMITTEE



The California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (Cal-JAC)

is an apprenticeship training program sponsored by the California Professional Firefighters, AFL-CIO and the Office of the California State Fire Marshal. Established in 1982, the Cal-JAC was designed to ensure that quality on-the-job training occurs after a person is employed as a firefighter. Through its participating fire departments, the Cal-JAC has upheld a strong commitment to building a broad, diverse pool of qualified firefighter candidates. This program has proven to be a benefit to candidates, firefighters and fire departments statewide.

The following information is provided to help you decide if a career in the fire service is right for you. We hope to give you an understanding of the job requirements so you can begin to prepare for this highly competitive field.



Do You Have What It Takes
To Prepare for the Job?



Academic Preparation

Firefighters use many different skills to perform routine duties. They must be competent in several areas including physical science, mathematics, chemistry, biology and mechanical reasoning. The message is simple – study hard and in addition to mastering the basic subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, choose classes that will serve you well as a firefighter.

- A firefighter needs general knowledge of physics and building construction to put out fires, perform rescue operations or inspect public buildings for fire safety violations.
- As a first responder to medical emergencies and vehicle accidents, a firefighter relies on extensive medical training. Consequently, many fire departments require firefighters

to become a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or licensed paramedic. Taking biology and physiology in school will give you a head start in this training.

- Firefighters use mathematics to perform hydraulic calculations. Therefore, a strong foundation in mathematics is necessary for the job. Advanced math such as algebra and geometry have proven to be helpful.
- Knowledge of chemistry and environmental ecology is necessary when responding to hazardous material and wildfire incidents.
- Firefighters maintain fire equipment and apparatus and would benefit from such classes as welding, woodshop and auto mechanics.

Staying Physically Fit

A good way to prepare yourself for this demanding profession is to maintain or improve your overall physical fitness. A suitable weight training program is a good place to begin. People of smaller stature should consider a specific program to develop upper body strength. Playing organized team sports will also increase your power and endurance, while giving you practice at being a team player.

There's no getting around it, firefighting is a physically strenuous job. The stress and sheer physical demand are tremendous and good health is not just an added benefit, it's a job requirement. The first and most important test most prospective firefighters take is the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT).

Do You Have What It Takes To Land the Job?

Firefighters must meet specific eligibility requirements in order to land the job. All firefighter candidates must pass a physical ability test, score well on a written exam and sit for an oral interview. They will also undergo a medical examination and background check prior to employment.





Passing The CPAT

The Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) is designed to ensure that applicants can demonstrate a minimum level of physical ability. You will be required to demonstrate the ability to climb stairs, pull hose, carry tools, raise ladders, force entry and more, all while wearing weight equivalent to the protective gear and equipment used by firefighters. The CPAT has become the benchmark in California. For information on how to prepare for the CPAT and written test, please visit our website at www.FCTCOnline.org.

Your One-Stop Testing Center

As part of its mission to recruit qualified candidates for the fires service, the Cal-JAC launched the Firefighter Candidate Testing Center (FCTC) as a way to offer the necessary prerequisite examinations in one place. FCTC now offers both the physical and written tests that fire departments up and down the state are using to fill their ranks when it comes time to hire.

Passing The Written Exam

The FCTC Written Exam is a fully validated, general knowledge written test with questions and examples tailored to the profession and designed to demonstrate your ability to process information and think critically.

Consisting of 100 questions, the multiple choice test will cover questions from the following four subject areas:

- Recall and Comprehend Verbal and Visual Information
- Recall and Comprehend Technical Information from Written Materials
- Solve Mathematical Problems
- Apply Mechanical Reasoning



The Oral Interview

Typically, a panel of two or three people will talk with you to determine if your education, work experience and personal qualifications are sufficient for the job. Being well prepared will boost your confidence and lower your anxiety. You should draft answers to the most common interview questions and practice speaking them out loud. You should also research the department you're interviewing with and prepare some questions of your own. Some standard questions you may be asked include:

- Why do you want to be a firefighter?
- Why do you want to work at this department?
- Describe how your education and work experience have prepared you for this position.
- If you are selected, what will you bring to this job?
- Describe a problem situation and how you solved it.
- How do you handle conflicts with other employees?
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- What areas of firefighting would bring you the most satisfaction?

Medical Examination

A general physical examination is often conducted prior to employment to determine your overall health and physical fitness. The mental and emotional demands of the job prompt some departments to give a psychological evaluation as well. Drug testing may also be a requirement.

Background Investigation

As potential sworn, public safety employees, firefighter candidates will be subject to a background check. Driving records, employment records

and conviction records (if any) are some items they review. They may also verify personal and professional references. Any of the following could disqualify you:

- A felony conviction
- Multiple misdemeanors
- Domestic violence or child abuse
- Shoplifting or theft of any kind
- Drug use
- DUIs

Do You Have What It Takes
To Do the Job?



It's more than a job . . . it's a calling

As a first responder, you are part of a challenging and rewarding profession. The job is dangerous and physically demanding, but it also offers infinite variety and personal satisfaction. Good pay and benefits make firefighting an excellent career choice. More importantly, you are part of a “second family” that takes care of its own even as it serves the community. Traits of a successful firefighter include:

- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Caring
- Positive attitude
- Team player
- Committed to a healthy lifestyle
- Mechanically inclined
- Willing to try new things
- Follow instructions
- Leadership skills

Where Do I Start?

The best way to start is by getting informed. The California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee (Cal-JAC) has been in the business of firefighter recruiting since 1982, and is one resource to get an overview of what you'll need. For more information on what it takes to become a firefighter, please visit www.FCTCOnline.org to set up your profile today. You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updated information on “becoming a firefighter”.

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California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee

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