



FIREFIGHTER

JOB DESCRIPTION

Firefighters are emergency personnel who rescue and protect people, animals, and property in a range of accidents or emergencies, from fires, traffic incidents, and floods, to bomb threats and environmental hazards. They educate the public on fire prevention and safety, and respond to emergency call-outs in order to extinguish fires, bring trapped people or animals to safety, and administer first aid before medical services arrive.



SALARY

Newly qualified firefighter ★★★★★
Station officer ★★★★★

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Competitive industry in which applicants often outnumber vacancies • Challenging profession with a tough selection process • Good opportunities for promotion and career development

AT A GLANCE



YOUR INTERESTS Health and safety • Community welfare and service • Physical Education (PE) • English • Mathematics • Science



ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS A reasonable standard of school is required. Firefighters must pass a series of physical and psychological tests.



LIFESTYLE Firefighters work on call or in shifts to provide 24-hour cover, including weekends and holidays. They typically work 48 hours a week.



LOCATION Firefighters are based at a fire station that houses firefighting equipment, and travel to locations to respond to emergencies as they occur.



THE REALITIES The job can be stressful and physically demanding. Firefighters are exposed to dangerous situations, such as unstable, smoke-filled buildings.

▼ RELATED CAREERS

- ▶ **ARMY SOLDIER** *see pp. 230–231*
- ▶ **POLICE OFFICER** *see pp. 240–241*
- ▶ **PARAMEDIC** *see pp. 250–251*
- ▶ **DOG HANDLER** Works with trained dogs to detect and prevent crime, protect property, or find missing people. Dog handlers may work for the police force, the fire and rescue services, the armed services, the security industry, or customs and border control.



In 2011 in the United States, nearly 2.2 million calls to the fire service were false alarms.

CAREER PATHS

Probationary firefighters usually start their careers working at a local fire department, each of which recruits on a local basis. Other employers include airports and the military services. Progressing to senior roles depends on gaining qualifications in areas such as advanced firefighting techniques, emergency medical technology, and disaster management (coordinating the response to disasters).

TRAINEE Your personal and physical attributes are more important than academic results, but a good general education is useful. To gain experience before applying, you can volunteer in support roles with a local fire station.

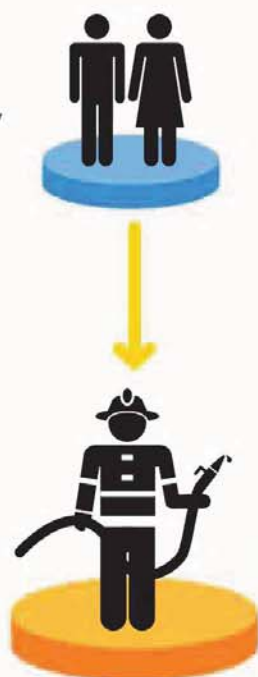
FIREFIGHTER Once you have gained front-line experience, you will have good prospects for advancing to senior and management roles. You can also specialize in a particular area, such as hazardous materials, fire investigation, or fire inspection.

FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER Visits homes and business premises to check that they are free from fire hazards and meet fire and safety regulations, such as having working fire alarms and extinguishers.

FIRE INVESTIGATOR Examines evidence at the scene of an incident to determine the causes of a fire, explosion, or other accident. Fire investigators are usually experienced former firefighters.

AIRPORT FIREFIGHTER Responds to aviation emergencies using specialty equipment, including suppressant foam for fighting aviation-fuel fires.

STATION OFFICER Manages the crew on shift—or watch—at a fire station, and ensures that crew are fully trained and firefighting equipment and vehicles are in a good condition. With experience, and after passing further exams, station officers can move up in rank, gaining additional responsibilities.



SKILLS GUIDE



Physical strength and endurance to carry heavy equipment and injured or unconscious victims.



Good verbal and written skills to communicate clearly and write accurate incident reports.



Strong team-working skills for collaborating effectively and quickly with emergency staff.



Good interpersonal skills for responding sensitively and reassuring people in distress.



Excellent problem-solving skills for effective decisionmaking in life-or-death emergencies.