

Recruiting and Testing of Firefighters



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RECRUITING AND TESTING OF NEW FIREFIGHTERS

Firefighters help protect our residents by responding to a variety of emergencies. They must be prepared to respond immediately to a fire or other emergency and are often the first responders to the scene of a traffic accident or medical emergency. Our firefighters may be called upon to put out a fire, treat injuries, or perform other vital functions. Great Falls Fire Rescue (GFFR) recently hired three new firefighters to fill vacancies within the organization after the recent retirement of two captains and a battalion chief.

Becoming a firefighter is a competitive and somewhat arduous process. Those who successfully make it through the recruitment process and earn one of the coveted positions have the right to be grateful and proud. In order to become a firefighter, recruits must go through a lengthy and difficult recruitment process in order to land one of the coveted career firefighting positions in Montana. The first step in becoming a firefighter includes successfully completing the Montana Firefighter Testing Consortium which includes written and physical components. Selected candidates then complete an oral interview process with various fire agencies.

GFFR participates in the Consortium, which consists of 10 of the larger Montana cities who have banded together in order to combine resources. Together they create a pool of qualified fire-service candidates. The Consortium develops a list of qualified candidates that is used throughout the state. The Consortium reduces duplication of

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efforts as the participating cities attempt to hire the best possible firefighters. All Consortium testing is done in June, but the application deadline is in February each year. As many as 300 candidates go through the Consortium each year. Local candidates are fortunate because the testing is conducted here in Great Falls.

Consortium candidates are asked to undergo a rigorous written exam to test their ability to reason logically, follow directions and demonstrate the necessary mental aptitude for the profession. A score of 80% or better is required in order for candidates to move on to the next portion of recruitment – the Candidate Physical Ability Text (CPAT).

The CPAT is a nationally recognized and validated physical test that has been used to test prospective firefighters throughout the U.S. and Canada. It begins with a stair climb test conducted on a stair machine while wearing a 75-pound weighted vest. With only 25 pounds removed, candidates then complete the “obstacle course” consisting of seven different tasks similar to those often carried out on a fireground. Each station tests the candidate’s ability to follow directions, sustain strenuous effort and maintain composure in confined and darkened spaces.

Those candidates who successfully pass the CPAT test within the time limit of 10 minutes and 20 seconds are then placed on a firefighter qualified candidate list making them eligible to apply for job openings with any of the 10 Montana fire services associated with the Consortium. Most departments require that any prospective candidates already have certification as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician.) Any additional certifications such as Firefighter I and Firefighter II are extremely helpful. These national certifications are often obtained through military fire training, through many of the rural volunteer departments, or through week-long academies offered through the state’s Fire Services Training School (an extension of the Montana State University system.)

If selected from the qualified candidate list, candidates may be interviewed by the interested agency. The interview process is highly competitive. For example, in December of 2013, GFFR interviewed 20 applicants. Not all qualified candidates receive an interview, and only three of those interviewed were hired. Qualified candidate lists are good until the next test is administered.

Those candidates selected for a firefighter position, must then undergo a pre-hire occupational physical and a background check. Only after receiving a clean bill of health and positive background check can a candidate be offered a position in most departments. Statewide, only about 20 career firefighters are hired in any given year. Those opportunities do not come easy or often.

For those interested in a career in firefighting, the first step is to register for Consortium testing, which takes place the first full week in June. The last day to sign up for this year’s testing is Friday, February 14, and the cost is \$75. To learn more visit <https://www.mtfiretesting.org/> or call 406-447-8404. To learn more about the firefighter recruitment process or a career with Great Falls Fire Rescue contact, Captain Dan Cherry at 406-781-5330

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Supporting Documents



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