

Preparing For A Fire Service Career?

This information provides an overview of the City of Mesa's Firefighter job description and may also help you prepare for the Firefighter Recruit Testing Process. The material presented here offers general information that may be helpful in pursuing a career in the fire service with the City of Mesa as well as other Fire Departments. This material is subject to change. The Mesa Fire Department is not responsible for outdated, inaccurate or misinterpreted information. In addition, please review the city job description and Firefighter Recruit job announcement (if available). The City of Mesa respects, values and welcomes diversity in our workplace. We encourage all interested people to apply.

Firefighter Job Overview

The journey to become a Firefighter is very competitive and requires significant effort. The Mesa Fire Department (MFD) has an average of 1000 applicants every testing cycle and anywhere between 1-3% of those applicants become Mesa Firefighters. A career in the fire service is challenging and rewarding. A Firefighter is a member of a four-person crew that lives and works in close quarters throughout a shift. While living at the firehouse for 24 hours at a time, firefighters train, cook, clean, and build relationships with each other, their customers and the surrounding communities. Crewmembers depend on each other, whether they are working at the fire station or responding to emergency calls. In the fire service, everything is done as a team. When we succeed, everyone succeeds and when we fail, everyone fails. Firefighters in Mesa work a 3~4 schedule meaning we work a 24 hour shift, followed by 24 hours off, followed by 24 hours on, followed by 24 hours off, followed by 24 hours on, followed by four days off. The schedule translates to an average of 240 working hours per month compared to 160 hours per month for the normal business schedule. During a shift, calls for emergency services are received around the clock every day of the week. Fighting fire is a small portion of the duties performed by firefighters. Approximately 75% of all fire department responses are to emergency medical calls such as motor vehicle accidents, falls, difficulty breathing, chest pain, etc. Other assignments may include Fire and Life Safety Education Programs, commercial fire inspections, community outreach, salvage and fire clean up, and many other department and customer service related activities.

Much of a firefighters shift may be spent inspecting, cleaning and maintaining fire apparatus and the equipment it carries. During fire ground activities and vehicle extrications, firefighters wear equipment that weighs upwards of 75 pounds while manipulating cumbersome tools and large hose lines.

General Qualifications

To become a Mesa Firefighter you must first apply for the position of Firefighter Recruit. A Firefighter Recruit applicant must be 18 years of age and have an education equivalent to a high school graduate. All applicants must possess a valid Arizona Driver's License as well as an Arizona or National Registry Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification plus a CPR certification in order to get hired. Both of these certifications can be obtained at a local community college. You must also pass a Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The City of Mesa does not conduct the CPAT; it is the applicant's responsibility to obtain a passing score from a CPAT Licensee. You can take the CPAT at local community colleges such as Mesa Community College or Glendale Community College. These community colleges also provide classes that focus on preparing you to pass the CPAT. Make sure that the organization providing the CPAT, whether it's a community college or a fire department, is a CPAT Licensee. Applicants also need to be sure that their results will be released to the individual and/or all fire departments. This is your responsibility. Do not wait until the last minute to pass a CPAT or you may be excluded from participating in the testing process.

Firefighting is physically and mentally demanding and requires excellent physical conditioning. A firefighter must possess good judgment, communication skills, mechanical aptitude, basic math skills and the ability to comprehend and apply the techniques of firefighting taught during the recruit academy. In addition, a firefighter must be able to face hazardous, life-threatening conditions and be able to deal with unpleasant and difficult situations. Firefighters must have excellent interpersonal skills and, at the same time, be team players that can get along with a variety of people. The ability to follow orders and work in a highly structured organization is also important.

Firefighter Recruit Testing Process

The first thing you should do is read the detailed City of Mesa job description for Firefighter Recruit.

http://citydoc.cityofmesa.org/citydoc1/groups/public/documents/jobdescriptions/com_c5_002866.hcsp

If you have determined this is the career for you, then you should consider applying for the position. This is a bigger step than most people think. When applying for any job, be honest about everything (even that 3 year old parking ticket) and complete the entire application. You may only apply during the open application process, either online or in person. Once the application has been submitted, you will be emailed (within 2 business days) your application identification number. The application identification number will be used to sign up for test sessions and track results. All applicants must have a valid email address in order to receive the applicant identification number and any updates to the testing process. Be responsible and do not lose your application identification number.

The first part of the testing process will be a Written Exam and/or a Video-based Exam. Study and prepare any way possible, to get the highest score possible on the exam. Do not be late to your exam and check the traffic conditions (construction, best route of travel and weather) prior to the examination day. Late applicants will not be permitted to test. The top applicants from the Written Exam and/or Video Based Exam will be invited to participate in an interview. The interview is challenging and the applicant should be well prepared. This is your chance to demonstrate your problem solving abilities and to tell us about yourself and your professional experiences. Make sure your answers are detailed and complete and that you answer every part of the question. We strongly suggest that you invest the time necessary to enhance your interview skills. All advancements within the Fire Department require an interview, so build your skills early. [Sharpen Your Interview Skills](#). The most qualified applicants will be selected to participate in a four-day internship (4 consecutive Saturdays/9 hours a day) called the *Mesa Fire Department Intern Orientation*.

The MFD Intern Orientation is designed to familiarize potential candidates with the various components of a MFD Recruit Academy. The Mesa Fire Department Recruit Training Officers and Health Fitness Instructors facilitate the Intern Orientation. Participants of the Intern Orientation are not financially compensated. The MFD Intern Orientation provides:

- a glimpse of the physical training and academic components of the Firefighter Recruit Academy.
- the necessary instruction and training to efficiently perform some basic firefighting skills.
- the opportunity to practice basic firefighting skills in an individual and team setting.

The MFD Intern Orientation is held at the Mesa Public Safety Training Facility, located at 3260 N. 40th Street Mesa, Arizona 85215. Completion of the Intern Orientation does not guarantee you will receive a second interview or be selected as a Firefighter Recruit. Applicants are chosen for the Firefighter Recruit Academy based on their performance in all phases of the testing process. Applicants not selected to enter the Firefighter Recruit Academy will remain on an eligibility list. Future academies may be filled from this eligibility list.

After The Call

Every firefighter remembers the day they were hired, the day they got "the call". If and when, you get the call, realize there are several phases left to the selection process. Applicants must provide information required for hire (proof of EMT & CPR, a valid Arizona Driver's License, High School Diploma, etc.) and must pass a drug screen, a physical exam, a driving history and FBI background check. Once you have successfully completed these steps, and have a formal job offer, you can then call yourself a Firefighter Recruit. A Firefighter Recruit trains to become a Firefighter for approximately 14 weeks at the Mesa Public Safety Training Facility.

Preparation

Becoming a firefighter often takes a great deal of long-term preparation, self-motivation, and commitment. There is no guarantee that any of the following suggestions will help you in your success, but experience has shown that these kinds of activities distinguish the best candidates and demonstrate your interest in the job. Advanced education is not a minimum requirement (see General Qualifications above concerning EMT/CPR) to be a firefighter; there are several types of Fire Science related certificates and degrees available. These classes and programs provide important knowledge and exposure to many aspects of the job of a Firefighter.

City of Mesa Firefighter Job Descriptions:

- Firefighter Recruit
http://citydoc.cityofmesa.org/citydoc1/groups/public/documents/jobdescriptions/com_c5_002866.hcsp
- Firefighter
http://citydoc.cityofmesa.org/citydoc1/groups/public/documents/jobdescriptions/com_c5_003178.hcsp

First Aid/CPR Courses:

- American Heart Association
<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000>
- American Safety and Health Institute
<http://www.ashinstitute.org/>
- American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org/>

Emergency Medical Technician Certification:

EMT Certification can be obtained at a local community college and is not limited to the colleges listed below.

- National Registry of EMT's – for all EMT Certification information.
http://www.nremt.org/about/nremt_news.asp
- Mesa Community College (MCC)
<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/>
- Glendale Community College (GCC)
<http://www.gc.maricopa.edu/>
- Scottsdale Community College
<http://www.scottsdalecc.edu/healthsci/emt.html>

Fire Science Technology:

Fire Science classes are offered at local colleges and are not limited to the list below.

- Mesa Community College (MCC)
<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d12/fsc/index.html>
- Glendale Community College (GCC)
<http://www.gc.maricopa.edu/fsc/index.htm>
- Arizona State University Polytechnic Campus
<http://www.poly.asu.edu/>
- Scottsdale Community College
http://www.scottsdalecc.edu/healthsci/fire_science.html

Firefighter I & II Certifications:

- Office of the Arizona State Fire Marshal
http://www.dbfs.state.az.us/state_fire_marshal/default.asp

Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT) and CPAT Classes:

- Mesa Fire Department CPAT Information
<http://www.cityofmesa.org/fire/Wellness/CPAT.aspx>
- IAFF CPAT Information and Licensee's
<http://www.iaff.org/hs/Well/CPATLicensestory.htm>
- Mesa Community College
<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d12/fsc/cpat/index.html>
- Glendale Community College
http://www.gc.maricopa.edu/fsc/advisement_registration.htm
- Paradise Valley Community College
<http://www2.pvc.maricopa.edu/fire/firefighteracademy.htm>
- Scottsdale Community College
http://www.scottsdalecc.edu/healthsci/fire_science.html

Community and Volunteer Involvement:

- The Fire and Life Safety Education (F.A.L.S.E.) Division of the Mesa Fire Department offers many volunteer opportunities.
<http://www.cityofmesa.org/fire/FALSE/default.aspx>
- Mesa Fire Connectors – Ages 18+
<http://www.cityofmesa.org/Volunteer/Connector/default.aspx>
- Mesa Fire Cadet Program - Ages 14-19
<http://www.cityofmesa.org/volunteer/CadetProgram/default.aspx>
- East Valley Bomberos
http://www.geocities.com/mesa_bomberos/
- City of Mesa Volunteer Opportunities
http://www.cityofmesa.org/jobs/Job_Openings.aspx#Volunteer
- Local Church
- Scout Troops
- Hospitals
- Schools

Physical Fitness:

A career in the fire service requires a dedication to a healthy lifestyle that must include a commitment to physical fitness. Those individuals that lack the discipline to maintain above average levels of aerobic capacity, anaerobic capacity, muscular strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility are not and will not be effective firefighters. They put themselves, their peers, and the public at risk every time they engage in high risk, physically demanding fire ground evolutions.

The Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) was developed by The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and 10 pairs of local unions and their municipalities as a component of the Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative. The goal of the CPAT is to provide a fair and valid evaluation tool to assist in the selection of firefighters, and to ensure that all firefighter candidates possess the physical ability to complete critical tasks effectively and safely. In actuality, the CPAT ensures that an applicant possesses the minimum physical attributes to begin the recruit academy, **but by no means is an indicator as to whether or not the applicant will successfully complete the physical components associated with recruit training.**

Many factors contribute to an applicant's ability to successfully complete the physical tasks inherent in a recruit fire academy. For example, staying in shape and continuing a workout regiment will ensure you are ready to begin a firefighter recruit academy. In some cases applicants fail to maintain a level of physical preparedness in anticipation of a job offer. They then discover that the amount of time between their initial job offer and their first day of the fire academy has provided them little time to adequately prepare. These individuals quickly learn that they have insufficient aerobic and anaerobic capacity, as well as muscular strength and endurance to successfully participate in fire ground evolutions and the daily physical training program.

Those who have chosen to pursue a fire service career need to continually improve their physical fitness level. This is not your average profession and in order to perform as a firefighter you need to have above average physical fitness levels. Use your time wisely to train specifically for a

career in the Fire Service. Seek the advice of an Ace Certified Peer Fitness Instructor or other Certified Health & Fitness Instructor. [The American College of Sports Medicine](#) and the [American Council on Exercise](#) are a couple of resources that may be helpful.

Miscellaneous:

There are many job opportunities in the Fire Service. Civilian positions are available with Fire Prevention, Fire Administration, Fire Resource, Fire Investigation and Fire Dispatch. Please check the current City of Mesa Job Openings. <http://www.cityofmesa.org/jobs/> Employment in the emergency service environment is helpful e.g., ambulance service provider, nurse, or medical assistant. You may also schedule a ride-along through the *Mesa Fire Department Observer Program* and see first hand what its like to be a Mesa Firefighter. This is an excellent opportunity to talk to firefighters and discuss the profession. Ride-a-longs are limited to twice per calendar year. <http://www.cityofmesa.org/fire/Admin/ObserverProgram.aspx>

Thank you for choosing the Mesa Fire Department and I hope this helps you achieve your goal of becoming a Firefighter. Remember, "Firefighter" doesn't describe what you *do* it describes who you *are*.

START YOUR PREPARATION NOW!

The above information is merely a reference and has a mixture of opinion and fact. All this material is subject to change. The Mesa Fire Department is not responsible for misinformation or misinterpretation.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will provide our customers (the residents, businesses, and visitors of Mesa) with the highest level of protection against the loss of life and property. We recognize that we are an integral part of the community and are sensitive and responsive to neighborhood needs and priorities.

We are dedicated to service as highly trained professionals in all aspects of rescue, emergency medical services, fire prevention and suppression, and the control of hazardous situations.

We uphold this commitment through quality emergency services and proactive emphasis on public education, code enforcement, hazard investigation, innovative life and fire safety awareness, and community service. This quality is supported through our commitment to maintain a positive, productive, and healthy work force through which these services are delivered.