Sharpen Your Firefighter-Recruit Interview Skills

The Firefighter-Recruit interview process can be stressful and a bit mysterious, so here are a few tips to help you prepare.

1. Prepare yourself for the Firefighter-Recruit interview and for the Recruit position. Think of this as a homework assignment.
   - Research the City of Mesa’s Fire and Medical Department and its mission, vision, and customers (see the City’s Fire and Medical Department website at www.mesaaz.gov/fire).
   - Review the Firefighter-Recruit job description. Analyze all qualifications, duties, essential functions, knowledge, skills, and abilities.
   - Draft a summary of your qualifications and work, school, and volunteer experiences.

2. Know what to expect from an Oral Board interview.
   - Thoroughly read all the questions and answer all parts of the question.
   - Raters can only evaluate your responses based on the information that you communicate during the interview. Do not assume that they know other information about you.
   - Answer the questions being asked. You will be evaluated on your responses to the questions as they pertain to the position.
   - You will be given time to preview questions in order to gather your thoughts and formulate some responses.
     - You will have an allotted period of time to make notes pertaining to the questions.
     - You may only use these preview notes during the interview. No other materials, resources, or papers will be allowed with you during the interview. All preview notes must stay in the room after the interview has ended.
   - If you don’t understand a question, you may ask the rater to repeat the question.
   - Raters will be taking notes and may not be looking directly at you during the interview.
   - The board will be comprised of three sworn Fire and Medical personnel. Other staff or Fire personnel who are involved in the testing process may be present to observe raters and the interview process.
   - Remember that the raters want you to do well!
3. **Practice for the Firefighter-Recruit interviews.**
   - Practice listening to questions with multiple parts, taking a few notes about the questions, and then answering all parts of the questions.
   - Analyze and be able to explain how your training, education, and work experience are related to the position.
   - Think about specific situations from your work, school, and volunteer experiences and practice talking about those.
   - Make an audio and/or videotape of your practice sessions or practice in front of a mirror.
   - Identify and correct any distracting mannerisms that you may have. Avoid using words like “um”, “like”, “you know”, “man”, “dude”, etc.
   - Draft potential interview questions and answer them.
   - Consider seeking feedback from a coworker, friend, family member, etc.

4. **Be professional.**
   - Dress appropriately in business attire.
   - Avoid overwhelming smells like smoke, cologne, perfume, etc.
   - Arrive on time and be sure that you are at the right location. If you are late you will not be allowed to interview.
   - Electronic devices (including cell phones or tablets) will not be allowed in your interview.
   - Please leave devices at home, or secure them in your car when you arrive for your interview.
   - Dispose of gum and tobacco.
   - Remove sunglasses and hats.

5. **During the interview . . .**
   - Listen carefully to the questions before you answer.
   - Ensure that your answers are detailed and complete. You may refer to your preview notes and you may also make additional notes during the interview.
   - Relax and breathe.
   - Sit up straight.
   - If your mouth is dry or you have a nervous cough, have some water that will be provided for you. (That’s why we provide it!)
   - Do not make assumptions regarding the gender of a person in a scenario.
   - Please do not be intimidated by raters who seem serious - they are supposed to be that way!

6. **Reflect on the interview afterward.**
   - What went well?
   - What could you have done differently or better?
   - Were you adequately prepared?
   - How should you prepare for the next interview - even if you get this position?
   - Remember, all testing information is confidential. Do not record or discuss the interview questions.