



## GUIDE TO BECOMING A FIREFIGHTER IN WASHINGTON STATE

**Minimum Qualifications:** Candidates must possess a High School Diploma or a GED, most candidates have some college or a two year community technical college degree in firefighting, and some have four year and post-graduate college. The age range is usually no younger than 18 years old and some require that you be 21 years old. Candidates must be in very good physical condition which is assessed through a physical agility test, the most common format is called the CPAT. The Olympia Fire Department has a great overview of the CPAT test ([olympiawa.gov/city-services/fire-department/fire-employment/candidate-physical-ability-test-cpat](http://olympiawa.gov/city-services/fire-department/fire-employment/candidate-physical-ability-test-cpat)) The CPAT test is DOJ approved to be without bias. Once a candidates has an offer of conditional employment they will also need to pass a minimum medical evaluation the details of which vary from agency to agency, the minimum suggested standards are located here ([washingtonfirechiefs.com](http://washingtonfirechiefs.com)). This is also where a psychological examination is typically administered, this test is to measure risk through tools such as the MMP. Your criminal and driving record with also be checked for disqualifying events as well as a background investigation involving your past employers, professional and personal references.

**The Testing Process:** Typically a candidate can expect a series of tests including a resume review, written test, oral panels and assessment style evaluations. The physical agility test is also given early, typically with the written and before the assessment style reviews. Some agencies hire a third party vendor to conduct their testing, such as Bates technical college ([www.bates.ctc.edu/firefighter](http://www.bates.ctc.edu/firefighter)) or Public Safety Testing ([publicsafetytesting.com](http://publicsafetytesting.com)). Short of that a candidate must contact each agency to determine when applications will be accepted and what the specific testing process is for that agency. The WFC has agency directories to assist you in making these contacts. Often times there are non-refundable application fees that must be submitted with the application. Some information on firefighting jobs may be found by searching the internet for sites like the Daily Dispatch ([dailydispatch.com](http://dailydispatch.com)) or the Washington Fire Chiefs website ([washingtonfirechiefs.com](http://washingtonfirechiefs.com)) where employment for some firefighter jobs are listed.

**Gaining an Advantage:** The competition is fierce for jobs as Firefighters so it's helpful to go beyond the minimum to increase your chances of success. Make sure you declare early that you will be using any Veterans preference points you have earned for the hiring process. Additionally almost every Firefighter is either an EMT or a Paramedic. In some cases like King County, Paramedics do not fight fires they only concentrate on advanced life support calls, which is considered a third service to a profession in Firefighting. If you are interested in being a Paramedic please contact us for that career path. The best

bet is to obtain the EMT certificate before employment. This can be done through various technical and community colleges such as Tacoma Community College ([tacomacc.edu](http://tacomacc.edu)). Sometimes a sponsor is required to get the class, in which case becoming a volunteer for a fire department would meet that requirement. For information on a local department who has a volunteer program, you can call 1-800-FIRELINE or visit the FIRELINE website ([justbethere.info](http://justbethere.info)) to be matched with a volunteer program near you. If you can't get an EMT certification, get an advanced first aid and CPR certificate, these do not require sponsors. The other certificate that helps employability is Firefighter 1 and 2 through a recognized basic firefighting academy, such as the state fire training academy in North Bend ([wsp.wa.gov/fire/fta.htm](http://wsp.wa.gov/fire/fta.htm)) and Bates technical college ([bates.ctc.edu/FireAcademy](http://bates.ctc.edu/FireAcademy)). The last leg in an advantage is experience, which can be obtained through existing fire department firefighter resident, intern, and volunteer programs. If this commitment isn't practical, other agencies like search and rescue might be considered to help practice at least your rescue and EMT skills.

**Mentor Program:** The WFC has a mentoring program that goes live in two months and is exclusive for Veterans who seek employment as a Firefighter in Washington State. Mentors will be incumbents in the fire service who have experience, training and education in the fire service and will help direct candidates on an individual basis in their path to become a career Firefighters. Contact us at [wfc@washingtontfirechiefs.org](mailto:wfc@washingtontfirechiefs.org) or 360.352.0161 to be considered for this program.

**Once you are Hired:** It is important to remember that once you are hired as a Firefighter, you will be on probation for one year. During that time you will have training and education requirements that you must meet. You will be evaluated throughout that year to determine if you are able to meet the minimum requirements of a career firefighter. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through the state apprenticeship program, JATC. ([wsffjatc.org](http://wsffjatc.org)). This process takes several years and concludes with a journey level certification as a Firefighter.

