



# Fire Fighter

## Applicant Handbook

*Last update – April 24, 2009*



An equal opportunity employer

## Table of Contents

Fire Fighter Applicant	1
What is the job of a Fire Fighter really like?	1
How can I apply to become a Fire Fighter?	2
What are the qualifications and special requirements?	2
Official Transcript Requirements	2
Hiring Policies	3
Selection Process	3
What types of test must I take?	4
Sample of Written Test	4
Physical Agility Test	5
Preparing for the Physical Agility Test	5
Fargo Fire & Rescue Division Acceptance Test	5
Oral Interview	7
Background Investigation	8
Pre-Employment Drug Test	8
Polygraph Examination	8
Medical Examination	9
Miscellaneous Information	9
Sample Test Answers	10
Attachment 1	11
Attachment 2	14

## Fire Fighter Applicant

This pamphlet was developed for fire fighter applicants by the city of Fargo Fire Department. It explains what the job involves and how to prepare for the examination process. Adequate preparation and familiarization with the various parts of the examination process may greatly improve your chances of passing the tests and becoming a fire fighter with the city of Fargo. Conscientious physical training that develops the upper body and legs and increases stamina will help you to prepare for the physical agility test. Past experience indicates that individuals in poor physical condition find it difficult to pass that test.

Essential qualities for members of the Fargo Fire Department are:

- The desire to serve
- The ability to perform, and
- The courage to act

Physical fitness, common sense, a desire to serve their community, and the ability to embrace the kind of discipline which ultimately could save their own lives as well as others are pre-requisites for successful fire fighter candidates.

If you are serious about an interesting and fulfilling career as a professional firefighter, you are urged to prepare thoroughly for the written test, the physical agility test and the oral interview. You are also encouraged to visit one of Fargo's fire stations and to converse with the fire fighters and officers regarding the nature of the job. By doing that, you may better determine whether the fire service is the right career for you.

What is the job of a Fire Fighter really like?

Fire fighting is extremely strenuous and physically demanding work and involves the ability to cope with emergency life-or-death situations. The physical and mental demands of fire fighting are sometimes underestimated; consequently, the challenging examination process employed in the testing of prospective recruits overwhelms many applicants. Rigorous entry standards are absolutely necessary because fire fighting requires a high level of physical fitness and mental alertness.

Fire fighter recruits must also be good students because fire fighters undergo continuous in-service training to maintain their competencies and keep them abreast of new technology and the latest fire prevention and suppression procedures.

It is necessary that a formalized training system be maintained to provide planned progressive work and learning experiences combined with classroom instruction. In-service training includes subjects such as fire fighting tactics, emergency medical procedures, hydraulics, ladder work, hose practices, ventilation techniques, handling of hazardous materials, fire code enforcement, public education in fire prevention, and arson investigation. Fire fighters would not be able to adequately fulfill the demands of the job without continued training in these areas.

## How can I apply to become a Fire Fighter?

File an application with the city of Fargo Office of Human Resources, 200 Third Street North, City Hall, telephone 701-241-1321. Those individuals who meet the established qualifications listed below may participate in and must pass a series of tests. Applicants on the current eligibility list cannot retest for this position until they no longer are on the list, which expires two years after the test date.

## What are the qualifications and special requirements?

- A. Must have a valid driver's license.
- B. Must be of sound mental and physical health and meet all established standards. Those candidates accepting a qualified job offer will have a pre-employment drug test, background investigation, polygraph examination, eye examination, a rigid medical examination and a pass/fail agility test.
- C. Must have one of the following:
  - 1. An Associate of Science Degree in Fire Technologies and Administration  
-or-
  - 2. Fire Fighter I/II curriculum as approved by the National Fire Academy or an equivalent program which conforms to NFPA 1001 and successful completion of 60 college semester hours in any subject  
-or-
  - 3. Successful completion of 90 college semester hours in any subject.  
-or-
  - 4. Equivalent education and experience
- D. Ability to obtain national certification as an Emergency Medical Technician within the probationary period on his/her own time and at his/her own expense.
- E. Must have the ability to understand the English language, written and spoken.

## Official Transcript Requirements

You must request an official transcript from your post-secondary educational institution. In order for the transcript to be official, it must be either mailed directly to the HR department from the institution or remain in the sealed envelope in which it was placed by the institution. **DO NOT OPEN THE ENVELOPE IF THE OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT IS SENT TO YOU.** Turn in the sealed envelope along with your application.

Educational Institutions may require a few weeks to process your request for an official transcript. You should make your request as early as possible with the deadline in mind. All official transcripts must be postmarked by the application deadline if mailed directly from the institution.

## Hiring Policies

1. You can easily determine whether you meet the Fargo Fire Department's illegal drug/alcohol abuse policy by answering the following questions:
  - A. Have you used marijuana at all within the last three years?
  - B. Have you used any other illegal drug (including anabolic steroids after February 27, 1991) at all in the past 10 years?
  - C. Have you ever sold any illegal drug for profit?
  - D. Have you ever used an illegal drug (no matter how many times or how long ago) while in a law enforcement or prosecutorial position, or in a position which carries with it a high level of responsibility or public trust?
  - E. Have you had a DUI or minor consuming/possessing within the last two years?
  - F. Have you had two DUI's?

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, you are not eligible for employment with the Fargo Fire Department.

2. You cannot have any body art (e.g. tattoos) that is visible while wearing short-sleeve uniform shirt or tee-shirt without a hat.
3. Being deceitful during a polygraph test will make you ineligible for employment with the Fargo Fire Department.
4. You cannot be hired by the Fargo Fire Department if you have been convicted of, or are under pending indictment for:
  - A. A crime which bears upon your ability or fitness to serve in the capacity;
  - B. Any felony; or
  - C. A misdemeanor which involved force or threat of force, controlled substances, or was a sex-regulated offense.

## Selection Process

The selection process is comprised of eight components designed to measure an applicant's potential for fulfilling the job duties of a fire fighter. The sequence and description of selection process testing are as follows:

- A. Written examination
- B. Physical agility test
- C. Oral interview
- D. Background investigation
- E. Pre-employment drug screening
- F. Polygraph examination
- G. Eye Examination
- H. Medical examination

## What types of tests must I take?

The written exam, the first stage of the testing process, is comprised of a series of questions that cover various areas of general knowledge, skills and abilities. Below is a list of five sample test questions.

### Sample of Written Test

Select the best or most correct response:

1. If Fire Fighter Erstad walked 15 yards up Lake Street, turned left and walked 30 yards down Belleview Avenue, turned right and walked 20 yards up James Street, turned right again and walked 30 yards down another avenue, turned to the right again and walked 20 yards down another street, turned to the left and walked 5 yards, which of the following streets or avenues would the fire fighter be located on?

  - A. Belleview Avenue
  - B. James Street
  - C. An unnamed street
  - D. Lake Street
2. If Fire Fighter Jones saved more money from his/her salary than Fire Fighter Smith, and Fire Fighter Smith saved more than Fire Fighter Davis, and Fire Fighter Davis saved more than Fire Fighter Trump, which of the following could not be true?

  - A. Fire Fighter Davis saved more than Fire Fighter Jones
  - B. Fire Fighter Smith saved more than Fire Fighter Trump
  - C. Fire Fighter Davis saved less than Fire Fighter Jones
  - D. Fire Fighter Smith saved less than Fire Fighter Jones
3. If there are 500 candidates applying for the entry level fire fighter position and there are only 20 openings, what percentage of candidates will be successful?

  - A. 4%
  - B. 7%
  - C. 9%
  - D. 25%
4. As a ship sails away from shore it appears to go below the horizon. The one of the following that best explains this observation is that it results from:

  - A. Rise and fall of tides
  - B. Curvature of the earth's surface
  - C. Refraction of light
  - D. Effect of gravity on moving bodies

5. A clay pitcher of water will crack if the water freezes chiefly because:
- A. During the process of freezing, the water expands
  - B. During the process of freezing, the water contracts
  - C. The crystallization process of ice formation causes the ice to solidify
  - D. The tension strength of clay decreases as the temperature decreases

All applicants meeting the selection criteria will be given the written test administered by the City of Fargo Human Resources Department. Those applicants that score 80% or more on the written test (not to exceed the top 30 applicants) will be permitted to attempt the physical agility test.

### Physical Agility Test

The physical agility test is conducted by the Fire Department Director of Training or his designated representative and is the second stage of the testing process. All eligible candidates will be notified as to the date, time and place that they are to appear for the physical agility test. The exercises that you will be required to perform are representative of duties actually performed by fire fighters at the scene of an emergency. The physical agility test is pass/fail. Failure in one phase of the test constitutes failure of the entire test.

In order to participate in the physical agility test, the applicant must obtain a signed statement from a medical provider stating that the applicant can safely participate in the test (See attachment 1). The applicant must also sign a release from liability form (See attachment 2).

### Preparing for the Physical Agility Test

It must be emphasized that regardless of their level of fitness, individuals should be in good health before beginning any physical training program.

There are several ways to approach physical fitness training. One way is to join a gym or spa where a fitness specialist will help design a training routine to fit your needs. Another less expensive method is one that you can accomplish by designing your own program. Preparation for the physical agility test can be attained by general exercises such as weight lifting, push-ups and pull-ups for muscular strength, jogging, running in place, and deep breathing for cardio-respiratory fitness. Most people can improve their level of physical fitness through an intensive training program.

### Fargo Fire & Rescue Division Acceptance Test

Applicant will wear a 50-pound weighted vest, helmet and gloves during this event. Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes, long pants - no shorts. We suggest that you bring a towel and an extra shirt, as you will perspire. Drinking water will be available at the test. No showers are provided.

### Hose Roll Event

Roll and unroll one 50-foot length of 2.5-inch fire hose. Roll hose tightly. This will help prevent hose from falling apart. Applicant must be in contact with hose continually while unrolling it, throwing the hose to unroll it is not acceptable. Coupling must be returned to the starting point.

### Hose Line Advance Event

Pick up nozzle attached to a 2.5-inch hose, place over shoulder and drag 150 feet to a designated line. Nozzle may be on the front or back of the shoulder. You may pick up additional hose and carry it in hand. After crossing line, turn around and return nozzle to starting point. Place the nozzle at the starting point. Forward progress must be maintained during this event.

### Ladder Carry Event

Remove a 14-foot ladder from mounting bracket by grasping two rungs. Turn and carry ladder walking around the traffic cone, and return the ladder to the mounting bracket. The total distance traveled is 90 feet. At no time shall the ladder touch the ground.

### Fire Extension Event

Here you will crawl through an opening onto simulated ceiling joists spaced 16 inches apart. You are to crawl on hands and knees to the opposite “wall”. After touching the “wall” with one hand, return again by crawling and exiting through the same opening. You must stay on the joists.

### Ladder Hoist Event

This event utilizes a 40-foot extension ladder. Grasp rope and using hand over hand motion, pull until the ladder stops, then lower the ladder fly. Do not allow rope to slip through the hands. You must maintain a standing position while raising and lowering the ladder.

### Ventilation Event

This event is meant to simulate chopping a hole in a floor or roof. The candidate uses a sledgehammer to drive a 170-pound steel beam a distance of five feet.

### High Rise Event

This event is divided into three continuous parts.

Part 1. Carry a 50-foot package of 1.75-inch hose and a 2.5-inch to 1.5-inch gated wye from a designated point at ground level to the fourth floor of the building taking

one step at a time. This equipment is then set down on the landing of the fourth floor.

Part 2. Now grasp a rope from a test monitor. Pull until the hose is within reach. Now grasp the 1.75-inch hose and pull in 50 feet. At this point the monitor will take control of rope and hose.

Part 3. Return to stairway, pick up the 50-foot package of hose and the fitting, return them to ground level taking one step at a time. The hose and fitting are to be set down outside the first floor window in the designated area.

### Rescue Event

You will drag a 185 pound dummy to the designated finish point (60 feet) where it is to be set down.

**Time limit for the above items – 12 minutes.**

### Simulated Smoke Conditions

Description of Test: The applicant, while wearing a blacked-out face piece, shall be required to find his or her way out of the second floor of the Fire Department “burn building”, via an exit door. Failure to find the exit within the allotted time or signs of panic or distress shall be reason for failure of this test.

Measures: This exercise determines if the applicant displays signs of claustrophobia; also tests for orientation and ability to reason under stress.

Time Limit: Five minutes.

### Forty-foot Ladder Climb

Description of Test: Applicant will climb to the top of ladder, extended to 75-degree angle. The applicant is required to wear a 50-pound weighted vest, helmet and gloves.

Measures: This exercise determines if an applicant has vertigo or acrophobia; also tests ability to climb ladder with mask on.

Time Limit: 45 seconds.

### Oral Interview

Applicants who have successfully passed the written and physical agility test will be given an oral interview examination.

All eligible candidates are notified by mail as to the date, time and place that they are to appear for the oral examination.

The oral interview is conducted by a panel consisting of Fargo Fire Department personnel and an individual approved by the Chairperson of The City of Fargo Civil Service Commission.

The types of questions that could be asked are:

1. Why do you feel that you would like to pursue a career as a fire fighter?
2. A fire fighter's duty day is 24 hours long. Do you feel you have the ability to work closely for an extended period of time with a group of people? Explain why you feel the way you do.

Qualified veterans are eligible for veteran's preference as per State and Federal Law. Any questions concerning eligibility should be directed to the Office of Human Resources.

### Background Investigation

Each qualified candidate is investigated as to his or her character and reputation. The candidate's present and previous employer(s) may be contacted for information regarding the work history of the candidate. Personal references listed on the application form may be contacted and interviewed on matters relating to the character and reputation of the candidate.

The background investigation also includes a thorough check into the candidate's police records.

### Pre-Employment Drug Test

A pre-employment drug test is administered to the qualified candidate or candidates. Failure to successfully pass this drug examination will result in the withdrawal of the qualified job offer. The test is conducted by a medical establishment designated by the City of Fargo and is paid for by the City of Fargo.

### Polygraph Examination

The candidate or candidates who are chosen for employment will be required to take a polygraph examination. This examination helps to verify the accurateness of the candidate's application and that his or her oral statements were truthful. Examples of questions that may be asked are those pertaining to the use of non-prescription drugs and/or the use of alcohol.

A professional polygraph examiner gives the examination. All of the questions asked are discussed with the candidate prior to taking the test.

The Office of Human Resources or a Fire Department representative will notify the candidate as to the time, date and location of the examination.

### Medical Examination

Prior to appointment the candidate must undergo a medical examination. The examination shall be in accordance with the current edition of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) pamphlet 1582, *Standard on Medical Requirements for Fire Fighters*.

The examination is conducted by a medical authority designated by the City of Fargo's Office of Human Resources or a Fire Department representative and is paid for by the City of Fargo. The Office of Human Resources or Fire Department representative will notify the candidate as to the date, time and location of the medical examination.

### Miscellaneous Information

All applicants should be aware that the normal tour of duty for fire suppression personnel encompasses a twenty-four hour period, commencing at 7:30 am one morning and ending at 7:30 am the following day. While on duty, the employee will be allowed to leave his or her duty station ONLY at the discretion of the Officer-in-Charge.

The new employee will serve a probationary employment period of one year and will be evaluated every six months therein.

The Fire Department is para-military in nature and the employee will be required to dress in a proper uniform, which is furnished by the City of Fargo.

Employees of the city shall not be required to live within the corporate limits of the city provided, however, that employees living outside of the corporate limits may be required to respond and be at his or her duty station within a certain specified time after being called by a supervisor. The Fire Department requires that employees be within twenty-five miles on all weather roads from the main fire station and must be at his or her station ready for duty within forty-five minutes from the time he or she received the call.

The probationary employee will receive the same fringe benefits as does a non-probationary; however, some of these benefits vary depending upon the length of service of the employee. These benefits include sick and injury leave, hospitalization and paid vacation, which is picked on a seniority basis.

A residence telephone must be maintained.

Any questions that an individual may have pertaining to the pay scale and employee salary in general should be directed to the City of Fargo Office of Human Resources.

We hope that the material contained on the previous pages will help answer any questions that you may have regarding the procedures as they apply to persons seeking the position of fire fighter with the Fargo Fire Department. Should you need any additional

information, please feel free to call the Office of Human Resources at 701-241-1321 or the Fargo Fire Department at 701-241-1540.

Sample test answers

1. a      2. a      3. a      4. b      5. a

*Good Luck!*

*Last update – April 24, 2009*

**Notice to Applicant for Fire Fighter Position  
Fargo Fire Department**

We require, as part of the employment process, that you participate in the physical agility test consisting of the elements attached to this document. In order to participate in this test, you must complete the following statement and have a medical provider complete the applicable portion no earlier than 60 days prior to the scheduled test date. **Any and all costs incurred to complete this form are the responsibility of the applicant.** You will not be allowed to take the test without this document and therefore, will not be considered in the current selection process for this position.

**Applicant's Statement**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (please print full name) understand what is required as described in this document and in the physical agility test. I am aware of my physical condition and I understand that I am not required to perform this test if I believe it would endanger my health or well-being. I have decided to take this test and will assume all risks associated with this test.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

Medical Provider's Statement

Medical Provider's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

It is my opinion that this individual **CAN** safely participate in the physical agility test attached to this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Medical Provider's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Fargo Fire & Rescue Physical Ability Test

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Time Limit: 45 seconds.

**Physical Agility Test  
Fargo Fire Department**

**RELEASE**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (print full name) am an applicant for fire fighter with the Fargo Fire Department. As part of the application process, I am required to undergo a physical agility test. I hereby release the City of Fargo and its employees or agents from any liability as a result of any injuries that may be sustained resulting from my performing the physical agility test.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date