



# **FIREFIGHTER**

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

## Test Information Guide for Candidates

**Contact Person:**

Julia Speegle  
Assessment & Development Specialist  
[Julia.Speegle@pbjcal.org](mailto:Julia.Speegle@pbjcal.org)

**Test Registration Deadline:**

Monday, May 20, 2024 at 4PM

**Test Location:**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Testing Facility  
2121 Rev Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd  
Downtown Birmingham

**Personnel Board of Jefferson County**

2121 Rev. Abraham Woods, Jr. Blvd  
Birmingham AL 35203

## Table of Contents

FIREFIGHTER TEST INFORMATION GUIDE OVERVIEW.....	3
OVERVIEW OF THE FIREFIGHTER POSITION.....	3
DESCRIPTION OF THE FIREFIGHTER TESTING PROCESSES .....	5
Firefighter Test Phase I: The Job Application.....	5
Firefighter Test Phase II: The Written Exam .....	6
How Do I Sign Up For The Written Exam? .....	6
Written Exam Location and Parking .....	6
TEST SCORING & RESULTS NOTIFICATION .....	8
DESCRIPTION OF RULES RELATED TO TESTING.....	9
WHAT TO BRING / WHAT NOT TO BRING TO THE TESTS.....	10
HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE FIREFIGHTER TEST .....	10
WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE FIREFIGHTER EXAMINATION PROCESS .....	12
PHYSICAL ABILITY TESTING .....	12
WHAT TRAINING DO I NEED BEFORE I AM HIRED AS A FIREFIGHTER? .....	12
CONTACT INFORMATION.....	13
ADA ACCOMMODATIONS .....	13

## Firefighter Test Information Guide Overview

---

Congratulations on your eligibility for the Firefighter examination! The Personnel Board of Jefferson County (PBJC) is pleased that you are interested in a job as a Firefighter within the Jefferson County Merit System. The PBJC has created this information guide to familiarize you with the position of Firefighter and the testing procedures for the job class. This guide is designed to provide you with an overview of the Firefighter position; the competencies being measured by the Firefighter examination; a description of the test components and the test administration; test scoring and report notification information; PBJC rules related to testing; what to bring and what not to bring to the exam; and how to prepare and what to expect from the Firefighter examination.

The Test Information Guide provides valuable information that will allow you to be more familiar with the Firefighter position and the examination process. It is strongly recommended you thoroughly review this manual and utilize the examples and information provided. Reading the entire guide will ensure you understand what will occur during the examination. Reviewing and understanding the descriptions provided will ensure you are prepared for the types of questions and scenarios that you will encounter. A thorough familiarity with the examination process will eliminate uncertainty and reduce anxiety that can sometimes be experienced in testing situations.

Please remember the material in this guide is designed to help you prepare for the Firefighter examination. You will not be allowed to use this guide while you take the exam. **You will not be allowed to carry this guide into the test site.**

## Overview of the Firefighter Position

---

The following information is provided in order to assist you in determining whether you are able and willing to perform the job of a Firefighter. An individual's expectations of the job before s/he is selected for the position often differ from what s/he experiences once on the job, which can result in low levels of job satisfaction. This information is designed to help applicants make more accurate judgments about their interest in working as a Firefighter.

The following information was gathered through a process (known as job analysis) of interviews, meetings, and surveys with Firefighter incumbents from various jurisdictions throughout Jefferson County. Through this effort, the PBJC explored what is typically done on the job, as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that a person needs to possess in order to successfully perform the work. Although not for everyone, a career as a Firefighter is both challenging and rewarding. If you decide to pursue a career in this field, you will be expected to perform the work behaviors described in this section.

The Firefighter job class is a Grade 19F position and is located in 15 jurisdictions within the Merit System. The salary ranges for Firefighter in the jurisdictions within the Merit System are presented below. Please note that salary ranges for each jurisdiction are subject to change due to cost of living adjustments. You can check current salary ranges at <http://www.pbjcal.org/employment/schedules.aspx>.

Jurisdiction	Step 1	Step 10
Bessemer	\$43,305	\$67,204
Birmingham	\$50,190	\$77,854
Fairfield	\$38,230	\$59,300
Fultondale	\$43,888	\$68,078
Gardendale	\$47,257	\$73,320
Homewood	\$45,697	\$70,907
Hueytown	\$44,220	\$68,598
Irondale	\$48,963	\$75,961
Leeds	\$45,198	\$70,116
Midfield	\$34,195	\$53,040
Mountain Brook	\$51,105	\$79,289
Pleasant Grove	\$41,641	\$64,604
Tarrant	\$42,889	\$66,560
Trussville	\$46,737	\$72,508
Vestavia Hills	\$46,820	\$72,654

The major duties performed by Firefighter employees that were determined to be critical during the most recent job analysis include:

- Administers patient care to all victims/patients by following accepted medical guidelines and using specialized medical equipment to ensure life safety of incident patients/victims.
- Participates in activities that project a positive image of the department to the public by attending off site facilities or hosting visitors at the station to conduct trainings, tours and other community related activities.
- Conducts fire safety activities for the general public that are designed to reduce the risk of fire related incidents from occurring and enhance awareness of general fire safety precautions.
- Assists in developing pre-fire plans for businesses, public buildings, and residences to include surveying buildings, collecting information regarding hazardous materials, occupancy, hydrant location, etc.
- Participates in activities designed to maintain and enhance job related skills and knowledge in order to keep certifications current and increase individual and department proficiency in incident response capability.
- Ensures proper operation and conditioning of equipment used for incident response by performing scheduled cleaning, checks and maintenance to enable safe and effective incident response and mitigation.

- Locates and removes victims from incident scenes by utilizing specialized rescue techniques and equipment for extrication of victims to minimize trauma, ensure life safety and transport to the appropriate facility for patient care.
- Carries out officer/incident commander's fire suppression orders by following incident response guidelines to extinguish the fire and ensure life safety of victims.
- Acts to minimize impact of property loss from incidents by assessing what areas of the incident should be preserved for investigation and by inspecting the scene and determining what debris should be left undisturbed to permit later investigation.

Work as a Firefighter for departments in the Personnel Board focuses on two areas: Response to emergencies (fires, auto accidents, etc.) and emergency medical calls (most departments run full EMS services). Work is performed in all climates and conditions such as extreme heat and cold. Protective gear should be maintained, readily accessible, and worn as prescribed. Physical demands are numerous and varied, but ultimately include moving or lifting heavy equipment or objects, bending, stooping, reaching, climbing, and driving heavy equipment. Firefighters frequently respond to fire alarms and medical emergency calls. Familiarity and skill with tools includes but is not limited to: hoses, nozzles, ropes, ladders, fire extinguishers, saws, axes, stretchers, backboards, spine boards, neck braces, axes, crowbars, radios etc. The main job duties include but are not limited to: rescuing victims from burning structures and accidents, searching structures that are on fire for victims, administering first aid to victims, following supervisors' instructions and communicating within team and chain of command to work on burning structures, focus efforts on containing, ventilating, and suppressing fires in burning structures. Shift work involving flexibility around holidays and weekends is required. Working extended shifts when working on active emergencies is a normal recurring event. Major EMS calls are frequent and require administration of advanced medical procedures necessitating use of protective equipment and proper handling of dangerous substances (e.g. bodily fluids, chemicals).

## **Description of the Firefighter Testing Processes**

---

### **Firefighter Test Phase I: The Job Application**

In order to be invited to sit for the Firefighter examination, you previously completed an online application form. You can access this form by going to [www.jobsquest.org](http://www.jobsquest.org) and clicking on the login link.

#### ***Your Existing Account and Application:***

You can access your account and application by entering your existing user ID and password to log into the system. You are encouraged to check the information on your application to ensure contact information is up to date. Inaccurate contact information can lead to a failure to receive important information about the examination or an inability of fire departments to contact you about potential employment.

If you can't remember your user ID or your password, you should contact Applicant Services at 205-279-3500 – Select menu option 1. You should not attempt to create a new account by

utilizing a different social security number. Individuals who attempt to create a new application by creating an inaccurate social security number will be disqualified from employment consideration.

### **Firefighter Test Phase II: The Written Exam**

Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications for the job of Firefighter will be invited to take a written exam, the Firefighter Experience Survey (FES), on **Tuesday, May 21, 2024**, at the **Personnel Board of Jefferson County Testing Facility in downtown Birmingham**. You will have approximately two (2) hours to complete the written exam, but should plan to be on site for up to three (3) hours.

The written exam includes questions in four areas: application of logic (valid reasoning), life experiences, mathematics, and reading comprehension. Response patterns to exam questions have been shown to be related to successful job performance as a Firefighter.

The logic section of the test requires candidates to apply a logical analysis to a series of statements. Several example questions are presented at the beginning of this section of the test. The life experience section asks a series of questions related to your life experiences, including experiences in school, at home, at work, and in the community. You must answer these questions truthfully as they apply to your own life experiences. Since your responses can be verified, providing untruthful answers could result in your disqualification from the testing process. The Math questions assess a candidate's basic math skills. For the reading comprehension questions, candidates read passages and use information from these passages to answer questions. All questions are multiple choices, and there is no penalty for guessing.

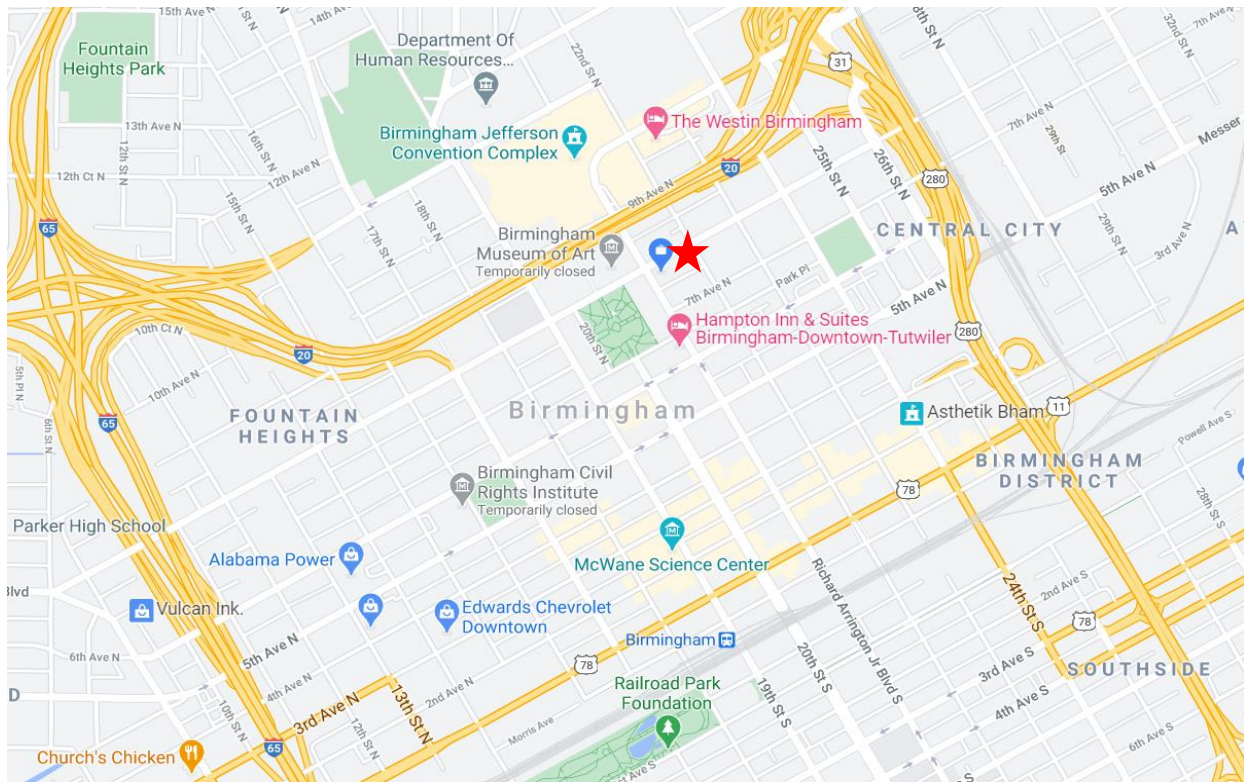
### **How Do I Sign Up For The Written Exam?**

Once you've been notified that you meet the minimum qualifications, follow the instructions provided in the email notice to register ONLINE for the written exam at [www.jobsquest.org](http://www.jobsquest.org). **Failure to register by 4:00 PM on Monday, May 20, 2024, automatically removes your application from further consideration.** You are only allowed to sign up for one test session, and you must report at or before the scheduled time in order to be admitted to the test.

### **Written Exam Location and Parking**

#### ***Exam Location:***

The Firefighter written examination will be held at the Personnel Board on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the 2121 Building located at 2121 Reverend Abraham Woods Jr. Blvd., Birmingham, AL 35203 (downtown Birmingham, formerly 8<sup>th</sup> Ave North). The map below illustrates with the red star where the 2121 building is located.



### **Parking:**

Given the amount of time you may be at the Personnel Board taking the test, **DO NOT** park in a metered space unless it is an 8-hour meter. Your best option is to park at the Birmingham Parking Authority (BPA) Deck 2 located next to the Boutwell Auditorium. The current parking rates for BPA Deck 2 are \$2.00 for the first hour and \$1.00 for each additional hour, up to \$9.00 per day or \$10.00 per day for the special event parking rate. Accepted forms of payment include cash, MC/Visa, AMEX, and Discover. For more information about the parking deck and rates, please go to the BPA website at [https://www.bhamparking.com/parking\\_lots/deck-2/](https://www.bhamparking.com/parking_lots/deck-2/).

The Personnel Board **DOES NOT** validate parking, nor are we responsible for costs incurred by candidates related to parking, including parking fees, fines and tickets. Allow plenty of time to travel, find appropriate parking and arrive at the check-in area on time. **If you arrive late to the candidate check-in area, you will NOT be permitted to enter the facility and take the test!**

### **Security Procedure:**

The 2121 Building security procedures requires the public, including all Merit System employees, to only enter the 2121 Building through the main entrance on the Reverend Abraham Woods, Jr., Blvd /8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North side of the building. For the test administration, you may be asked to present a photo ID to a security guard or testing staff member in the building lobby and will be directed to check-in (on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor). On test days, these procedures may create some delays; therefore, please allow yourself extra time to go through this process. The Personnel Board will not extend the grace period, so if you are later than 15 minutes passed your scheduled time reporting to the check-in location you will not be allowed

to check in for the test. In other words, your arrival time to the building does not matter; you must arrive at the designated check-in location by your check-in time.

## Test Scoring & Results Notification

---

Approximately 3-4 weeks after the written exam, you will be notified of your score by email. When you receive your test score notice, it will include your final score on the exam as well as your preliminary rank. This rank is tentative and may change if there is any change to candidates' scores during the appeal period.

### ***What if I DO NOT Pass the Written Exam?***

Candidates who do not pass the written exam will receive instructions for how to deal with any questions or concerns about the final score in their score email. The written exam for Firefighter is referred to as a hurdle. This means that in order to proceed through the rest of the hiring process, you must receive a "passing" score on the exam.

Four (4) business days from the date the score notices are emailed constitutes the appeal period for this examination. If you have any questions about your test score or rank, please contact the staff member listed in the test score email. If after speaking with this staff member you still have concerns about your test score, you may submit a written appeal to Jeff Crenshaw, the Personnel Board Director, outlining your concerns. All appeals are treated seriously and reviewed thoroughly before making a determination. Appeals related to the **content** of the test, however, are **not** considered. Procedural matters related to test administration, assessment, or score calculation are legitimate areas for appeal. For example, if you feel that you received different treatment than all other candidates, you may appeal this. But if you don't like a particular question or do not feel that it is related to the job, you may not appeal this matter.

Typically, one-third to one-half of the candidates for Firefighter do not pass the written exam. If you do not pass the written exam, please do not be discouraged. This does not mean that you have no hope of a career in the fire service. It simply means that for this testing period, you did not score high enough on the written exam administered by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County to receive further consideration.

### ***What if I DO Pass the Written Exam?***

If you successfully pass the exam, your name will be added to an eligible register of candidates. Your name will be placed on the list, in rank order, according to your score on the exam. Names are sent to departments with vacancies throughout Jefferson County according to rank on the test. The number of ranks sent to a department is determined by the number of vacancies they are authorized to fill. For instance, if a department has 1 authorized vacancy, they will receive the top 10 ranks. If the department has 2 authorized vacancies, they will receive 11 ranks and so on and so forth. (Keep in mind that your rank will improve as other individuals are selected and hired off of the eligible register.) The Firefighter register stays active for up to **one year**. If, during that period, you would like to see if your rank has changed, you may call our Applicant Services at 205-279-3500 – Select menu option 1.



The various jurisdictions for which there are openings for Firefighter may wish to conduct background checks, criminal record checks, or further selection procedures to review candidates. After the eligible register has been released to these jurisdictions, you must contact them for further information about your status in the selection process. Please note that in some cases, a specific jurisdiction may require you to participate in additional interviews or other selection processes before hiring you.

## Description of Rules Related to Testing

---

**Electronic Devices are Prohibited:** Electronic devices include cell/smart phones, radios (including work radios), smart watches, tablets, Bluetooth devices, MP3 players, e-readers, calculators, laptop computers, pagers, etc. ***Candidates bringing such devices will not be allowed to check-in, and will be required to return such items to their vehicles.*** If a candidate misses his/her check-in time while returning an electronic device to their vehicle, he or she will not be permitted into the test. ***There are no exceptions to these rules.***

**Grace Period:** You should report to the Firefighter exam promptly at your scheduled check-in time. The fifteen minutes following the check-in time constitutes the “grace period” during which candidates will still be permitted to check-in to the examination. Also, during this time, candidates who brought outside materials, electronic devices or other prohibited items will be asked to return those items to their vehicles. However, if those candidates do not make it back to the check-in area before the grace period closes, they will not be permitted to take the exam. The grace period closes at precisely fifteen minutes after the scheduled check-in time.

**Make up Exams:** No make-up examinations will be given. The sole exception to this rule will be for eligible candidates who are on active military duty on the day of the exam, in compliance with USERRA guidelines established by the federal government. Traffic emergencies, family emergencies, illness or other incidents, regardless of whether or not they are outside your control, do not constitute grounds for a make-up exam.

**Cheating:** The Personnel Board has a strict “no cheating” rule. If you are caught cheating during any component of the examination, you will receive a zero and be immediately disqualified and escorted from the premises. In addition, you may be barred from taking any future merit system examinations (Rule 9.14). There are no exceptions to this rule.

**Smoking:** Smoking or vaping breaks will not be accommodated under any circumstances. Candidates found attempting to smoke or vape in restrooms will be disqualified from the examination. There are no exceptions to this rule.

**Emergency Calls:** If anyone needs to contact you while you are taking the Firefighter examination, please have them contact the front desk of the Personnel Board at 205-279-3500 – Select menu option 1. A message will be taken and the information will be relayed to the test administrators who will then notify you. **Note: THIS IS FOR EMERGENCY CALLS ONLY.**

## What to Bring / What Not to Bring to the Tests

---

**BRING a VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE** to the exam location. You will not be allowed to enter the exam location nor take the Firefighter exam without your **VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE**. **You will NOT be permitted to take the test unless you have a valid (current or unexpired) driver's license with date of birth in your possession at the time you report for the exam!**

**BRING** a small personal sized cooler with any food and/or beverages that you might need during the test period. Remember, you may be at the testing location for up to **3 HOURS**. Access to food and beverages will be limited. If you anticipate wanting food or beverages (including coffee and water), please bring these items yourself.

**DO NOT BRING any communication devices or electronic devices** such as cell phones, tablets, pagers, iPod, mp3 players, or smart watches, etc. If you have these items with you at check-in, you will be required to return them to your vehicle as these items are **NOT** permitted on the testing floor. **The Personnel Board will not hold them for you, nor will we take responsibility for items lost or damaged.** If you miss your check in time due to this, you will **not be allowed** to take the exam.

**DO NOT BRING** any outside reading materials to the examination, including magazines, newspapers, books, or study materials. Any personal reading materials brought to the test will be confiscated and discarded prior to entry to the check-in area. There are no exceptions to this rule.

## How to Prepare for the Firefighter Test

---

✓ *Come prepared.*

Bring all the materials you will need, such as your valid driver's license. **You must bring a VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE** to the exam location. You will not be allowed to enter the exam location nor take the Firefighter exam without your **VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE**.

Being prepared will also help you focus on the task at hand. **Leave all electronic devices at home or in your vehicle. You will not be allowed to enter the testing facility if you have any electronic devices with you.** Please **DO NOT BRING any cell phones, tablets, smart watches, pagers, or other electronic communication devices.** If you bring any such device with you, you will be asked to return the item to your vehicle before you can check-in.

✓ *Remember the following when responding to the test exercises:*

1. You should respond to all items that are presented (do not leave any questions unanswered).
2. You do not have to have actual experience as a Firefighter to successfully respond to the test questions.

✓ *Have a positive attitude.*

Approach the test as you would approach a difficult task. It might be tough, but you can do it! A positive attitude goes a long way toward success. Remind yourself that you are well prepared and are going to do well.

✓ *Read the study materials thoroughly.*

This Test Information Guide has been provided to you to help you prepare as much as possible for the various components of the Firefighter exam. This Guide can hopefully provide some insight into the testing process, what to expect on the test day, as well as the job duties and other requirements that are important for the Firefighter position.

✓ *Get plenty of rest.*

The night before the test, you should get to bed early. In fact, get a good night's sleep for several nights in a row before the test. Remember, your brain and body need sleep to function well, so do not stay up late!

✓ *Eat breakfast/lunch.*

You think more clearly when you have a full stomach; therefore, do not skip breakfast or lunch on the day of the test.

✓ *Dress comfortably.*

Be sure to dress comfortably when you come to the exam. You may be at the testing facility for **up to 3 hours** completing the written examination. You will not be evaluated based on your appearance, although professional attire may help put you in the appropriate mindset for the exam.

✓ *Arrive early for your scheduled check-in time.*

Allow adequate time for parking at the test facility. Candidates who arrive late for their check-in time will not be permitted to take the test.

✓ *Make sure you have all necessary materials.*

Before the test begins, make sure you have everything you will need to successfully complete the examination process. Also, make sure you have all pages of the test instructions, so that you understand what to do.

✓ *Listen to and read all instructions.*

Listen to all instructions from the test administrators and **read all instructions** contained in the test. You want to make sure you are performing the tasks correctly. If you cannot hear or understand the instructions, ask one of the administrators to repeat the information.

✓ *Stay relaxed and confident.*

Do not let yourself become *anxious*. If you feel anxious before or during a test, take several slow, deep breaths to relax. Do not get worried or frustrated.

## What to Expect During the Firefighter Examination Process

---

You will be given opportunities to use the restroom prior the exam. You should use these opportunities as necessary. Once the exam begins, you will be permitted to use the restroom but the test timer will not stop. Any time spent in the restroom or water breaks during the test is time lost from your total time allotted for you to complete the test.

You will not be permitted to open your exam or preparation booklets until you are instructed to do so.

Candidates making any disturbances or caught cheating will be disqualified from the test.

Test Administrators will **not** interpret or explain test questions for you; however, they can assist you with any problems you may have.

## Physical Ability Testing

---

Once your name and application has been sent (i.e., certified) to a fire department, and the department is interested in considering you for a firefighter job, you will have to complete a physical ability test. **All physical ability testing is conducted by the hiring jurisdiction; NOT the Personnel Board.**

The City of Birmingham has a physical ability test that is comprised of five tasks, including a hose drag, a dummy drag, a stair climb, a hydrant opening/closing, and a pulley hoist.

All other departments require candidates to pass the CPAT (Candidate Physical Ability Test) which is comprised of tasks similar to Birmingham's test.

Both of **these physical tests are challenging**. Individuals who are overweight, out of shape, or physically weak will have a difficult time passing the exam. It is very important that if you are not in excellent physical shape already, you seek assistance from a doctor or physical trainer to establish an exercise program that will increase your endurance and strength before you take the physical ability test. Candidates who are successful throughout the entire testing process but who are not able to pass the physical ability test will **NOT** be employed as a Firefighter. Again, the physical ability test is **NOT** conducted by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County; it is conducted by the fire departments after you are certified for employment.

The CPAT is covered in great detail in a YouTube video that can be accessed through the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F330qzb62J4>

## What Training Do I Need Before I Am Hired as a Firefighter?

---

You do **NOT** need any experience or training in firefighting to be hired as a Firefighter in the jurisdictions within Jefferson County. However, the following training or experience may improve your chances of being hired by one of the jurisdictions.

- Paramedic License – Since a majority of the work done by firefighters is medical in nature, individuals with medical experience are frequently preferred by many of the fire departments. In order to serve the needs of our fire departments, the PBJC created a job called Fire Paramedic. **If you already have an active Paramedic’s License you no longer have to take the firefighter test to be considered for employment.** Instead, you may apply directly to the Fire Paramedic job posting. Although you are permitted to take the Firefighter exam, **the Fire Paramedic job posting allows you to be considered by departments without requiring a PBJC test.**
- Emergency Medical Technician – Following Paramedics, individuals already EMT certified will frequently have a greater chance of being offered a position with a fire department.
- Certified Firefighter – Holding firefighter certification may enhance your chances, especially with the smaller departments.
- Physical Training – As described above, being in excellent physical condition will aid you during the Physical Ability Test, during training academy, and during your time on the job.

## Contact Information

---

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this material or the examination process, please contact any of the individuals listed below.

Julia Speegle  
Assessment & Development Specialist  
Email: [Julia.Speegle@pbjcal.org](mailto:Julia.Speegle@pbjcal.org)  
Phone: 205-279-3601

Stacey Lange, Ph.D.  
Industrial & Organizational Psychologist  
Email: [Stacey.Lange@pbjcal.org](mailto:Stacey.Lange@pbjcal.org)  
Phone: 205-279-3607

Sarah Freed  
Test Administration & Assessment Coordinator  
Email: [Sarah.Freed@pbjcal.org](mailto:Sarah.Freed@pbjcal.org)  
Phone: 205-279-3599

## ADA Accommodations

---

If you would like to request special testing accommodations or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact Marty Alber at 205-279-3595 or at [Marty.Alber@pbjcal.org](mailto:Marty.Alber@pbjcal.org).

The deadline for requesting ADA accommodations is Monday, May 20, 2024.