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# Vancouver Fire Rescue Services Guide for Applicants



## **A. GENERAL INFORMATION**

This guide is intended to provide you with information about Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) as it pertains to recruiting. It will help to answer questions you may have about our required and preferred qualifications, our application process and working as a Firefighter. Please read all the information in this guide before applying. This will give you the opportunity to learn about becoming a Firefighter, to determine whether you have all the required qualifications and to consider whether you are suited for a career in Firefighting.

VFRS typically runs one recruitment intake per year. Dates for upcoming recruitment intake periods are advertised on our webpage and at this time applicants can **only** apply during these intake periods. VFRS only recruits for the position of entry level career Firefighter. Recruitment numbers are based on attrition of current members and thus hiring numbers can fluctuate year to year. Generally up to 30 new Firefighters are hired per year.

All administrative and support positions within VFRS are hired through the City of Vancouver.

## **B. FIREFIGHTING AS A CAREER**

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services strives to hire the best, most well rounded person for the job. We are looking for qualified men and women who are pursuing a demanding, exciting and rewarding career in Firefighting to join our team.

Today's Firefighter is a skilled professional able to face every kind of emergency. Vancouver Fire Rescue Services will provide training on preferred methods for various job tasks. Through this training and experience Vancouver Firefighters learn the latest developments in Firefighting, rescue techniques, medical emergency procedures and public education. We also cover such subjects as the control of hazardous materials, communication systems, fire prevention legislation and fire investigation techniques. Vancouver Fire Rescue Services is a customer-focused organization and the ability of our Firefighters to speak other languages have knowledge and experience of different cultures is an asset.

If you are interested in becoming a Vancouver Firefighter you need to possess:

- Adaptability
- An ability to think critically
- Teamwork and communication skills
- A lifestyle that exemplifies fitness, health and wellness
- A desire to serve the public
- Mechanical aptitude
- Compassion/empathy

Working as a Firefighter you will be exposed to prolonged hours of physical and mental exertion. You will experience sleep deprivation and may be awake for up to 24 hours at time. You will be exposed to stressful situations that will be mentally, physically and emotionally challenging. You will work in situations that have a risk of injury or death. You will be expected to maintain a professional level of conduct both on and off the job. Your actions

and behavior may be captured and put on media and/or social media by news teams and the general public.

VFRS has many systems in place to support and help our members due to the numerous challenges we face in this profession. We are a brotherhood/sisterhood that come together to look out for and support each other on and off of the job. We have a Critical Incident Stress Management team that debriefs and supports crews after difficult calls. All members receive “Resilient Minds” training that focuses on strategies to deal with the challenging mental aspects of our profession. We even have a trauma dog named “Lola” that helps members to deal with occupational stress. We have an Occupational Health and Safety team that are dedicated to making our daily jobs as safe as possible. We also have an Employee Assistance Program that not only supports our members but also their families because we recognize that issues at work can affect family members too. You can be sure that members of Vancouver Fire Rescue are well supported.

### **C. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

Applications will be screened to ensure the following qualifications have been met. If you do not meet **ALL** of these \*, please do not submit an application as it will be screened out:

\*note, as indicated below, some exceptions have been made whereby certain qualifications are not required at the time of application, provided the applicant obtains said qualifications by the time of hire or other times as required by the Department.

1. Transcripts demonstrating high school or GED completion (**NOT diploma**).

**\*High school transcripts from educational institutions outside of North America must be accredited by a Canadian accreditation service and if not written in English must be translated to English and officially notarized before submission.**

2. Current driver's abstract (dated no more than **45 days** prior to the VFRS application closing date). This abstract should demonstrate responsible and safe driving behavior. A current record with:

- Infractions on your Driver's Abstract within the last 5 years for **Driving under the Influence (DUI) will eliminate** applicants from consideration
- More than **6 points may eliminate** an applicant from further consideration in the current process
- A **24 hour Roadside Prohibition** (for possible DUI) within the last 2 years **may eliminate** an applicant from further consideration in the current process

3. Valid BC Class 3 Driver's License (or higher; Class 1 for example) with air brake endorsement or equivalent for vehicles with more than 2 axles (Automatic transmission is accepted). Equivalent licenses from other Canadian Provinces or territories are acceptable.

**\*Applications without this qualification will be accepted only if you are able to obtain the qualification by either of these dates at the discretion of the Fire Department:**

1. Time of official job offer; or
2. Time of hire.

Contact BC Driver Services for equivalency clarification at 1-250-978-8300

4. Two years of accumulated work experience after the completion of high school.
5. Valid BC Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board (EMALB) **License** in one of the following:
  - First Responder (FR) with Schedule 2 Endorsements
  - Emergency Medical Responder (EMR)
  - Primary Care Paramedic (PCP)
  - Advance Care Paramedic (ACP)

Please provide a legible copy of the letter from EMALB stating you hold a valid license, including your license number and expiry date. \*Note: If you have the older style card license, please include both front and back copies of the license.

**Applicants must be licensed in BC.** You may contact EMALB via the link below to enquire about transferring your qualifications:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=7EE60FAD834E4FB08914A5A0BD1876D0>

The First aid license must be maintained throughout the application process.

Newly hired Firefighters will have the option to maintain their current level of EMALB First-Aid Licensing throughout their term of employment. This is for EMR, PCP and/or ACP EMALB First-Aid License holders and will be facilitated through VFRS.

**\*Applications without this qualification will be accepted. However, you will be required to obtain this qualification by either:**

1. Time of official job offer; or
2. Time of hire.

Which date will be at the discretion of the Fire Department.

6. Legal entitlement to work in Canada must be shown by submitting a clear copy of one of the following:
  - Canadian Birth Certificate
  - Canadian Passport
  - Current Permanent Resident Card
  - Current Landed Immigrant Card

**Please note that a work visa is NOT acceptable.**

7. Vision and Hearing that meet the criteria in NFPA 1582 Chapter 6:
  - Color vision safe
  - 20/30 corrected binocular vision and 20/100 uncorrected binocular vision or better

- Normal hearing without artificial aids

Applicants will be assessed during the Medical Screening Stage for these requirements.

**\*Do not contact us about your medical conditions, that is confidential and the onus is on the applicant to seek further information from their medical provider/specialist and or contact a pre-employment medical provider, as to your suitability for the position of Firefighter.**

8. Completion of NFPA 1001, Level I and II with appropriate IFSAC or Pro Board Seals (see [www.ifsac.org](http://www.ifsac.org) or [www.TheProBoard.org](http://www.TheProBoard.org) for a list of accredited fire academies).

**\*Applications without this qualification will be accepted only if you are able to obtain the qualification by either of these dates at the discretion of the Fire Department:**

1. Time of official job offer; or
2. Time of hire.

**\*\* Please note that the written exam will contain NFPA 1001 level 1 and 2 course content. Applicants without their NFPA 1001 are encouraged to self-study the NFPA material in preparation for the exam.**

9. NO job related conviction of a criminal or summary offense for which you have not received a pardon.
10. Your resume will be no more than 3 pages long - not including the cover letter, references or professional reference letters - in a 12 point font. Depending on your education and work experience you may not be able to list everything within 3 pages. In this case use the application to supplement anything you are unable to fit into your resume.

## **D. PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS**

These additional skills and experiences will enhance your application but do not replace the required qualifications:

1. Completion of other fire service related courses or programs. A copy of documentation demonstrating participation or completion must be provided in the application. We do not recommend any course/ program in particular.
2. Education after completion of High School that demonstrates adult learning including but not limited to academic, technical or trades training. A copy of documentation demonstrating participation or completion must be provided in the application.
3. Higher or other levels of first aid or first responder certification such as: Occupational First Aid Level 3, EMR, EMR Bridging, PCP, EMR License, PCP License, nurse or doctor.
4. Practical experience transferable to areas of Firefighting:

- Experience/training in Emergency Services: Fire, Police, Coast Guard, EMS, Military, Search and Rescue, Work Experience Programs (WEP) and Forest Fire Service
  - Construction related trades
  - Heavy equipment operator, Truck driving tandem axle vehicles with a class 1, 2 or 3 license
  - Advanced medical training (Paramedic PCP/ACP, EMT, EMR, Nursing)
  - Valid British Columbia Class 4 Driver's License
  - Academic studies - college/university
  - Coaching, teaching and or instructional experience
  - Ability to swim and related lifesaving and rescue certificates
  - Volunteer experience and community involvement
  - Demonstrated athletic or physical capabilities and achievements
  - Knowledge and ability to work effectively with computers, programs and software
  - Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a team environment
5. Second language
  6. Demonstration of service to the community through volunteer experience, other than duties assigned as a Volunteer/POC Firefighter (e.g., responding to calls, training etc.) Please include hours and duration when listing volunteer experience.
  7. Knowledge or experience of other cultures and diversity. Fluency in languages other than English/Travel experience.
  8. Professional Reference letters. Please DO NOT include Character References.

## **E. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION**

**\*We are currently in the process of developing an Online Application. We anticipate having this in place before the next hiring intake. All updates will be posted accordingly on our webpage at [www.vancouver.ca/firejobs](http://www.vancouver.ca/firejobs)**

The current method to apply is below:

Applications will be available to download from our webpage only during the application intake periods. Failure to **follow all instructions** and submit **all supporting documents** with the application will result in that application being screened out. If **all required qualifications have not been met** the application will be screened out.

**Completed applications must be RECEIVED by VFRS no later than close of business (5pm) on the last day of the intake. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they allow enough time if they choose to deliver their application through mail, courier or in person.**

**Applications may also be dropped off in person in a sealed clearly marked envelope. It must be brought to #1 hall at 900 Heatley Avenue between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Do NOT drop off to firehall personnel (it must be received by Admin personnel). Follow the instructions posted on the front door. Please do not**

**ask on duty Firefighters at #1 hall to assist with the submission of your application. Please do not interrupt the firehall portion of #1 hall.**

Due to the high volume of applications we receive we are unable to confirm receipt with individual Applicants.

## **F. SELECTION PROCESS**

### **Step 1. Applications To Be Completed, Printed and Submitted**

Please ensure that you meet all of the required qualifications before you complete and submit an application. A “Personal History Statement” that is part of the application form, must be signed and included in your application package. Specific instructions for completing this are in the application package.

Completed applications will be thoroughly screened by the Recruitment Team. After which selected Applicants will move forward to the written exam.

After you submit your application, if you do not move on to the written test stage please do not contact Recruitment to inquire as to why you were not selected. Again, due to the high volume of Applicants we are unable to provide individual feedback for each Applicant regarding the selection process at this time in the process.

### **Step 2. Written Test**

Short listed Candidates will be invited to take a Written Test. This test could include but is not limited to: math, mechanical reasoning, reading comprehension, spatial analysis, following directions and a general aptitude component. The written exam will also contain a component consisting of questions derived from IFSTA Essentials of Fire Fighting, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Candidates may purchase a copy of the “NFST Candidate Orientation Guide” (There are fifteen (15) practice test questions included in this guide that were derived from Essentials, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. only.) from the Fire & Police Selection Inc. website:

<https://www.fpsi.com/product/vfrs-2019/>

The **NFST Candidate Orientation Guide** can be downloaded on the page following the instruction and disclaimer page that applicants must read and agree to. This will ensure the orientation guide is downloaded successfully.

Once the guide is in the FPSI shopping cart applicants will be given the option to pay with a PayPal account or as a PayPal guest with credit card. The download link will be located on the Order Received-Checkout Page that appears on the FPSI website as soon as payment is submitted and applicants are redirected from PayPal back to FPSI. Applicants must pay close attention to ALL instructions on both FPSI and PayPal’s websites in order to download any guide properly.



You can also use other firefighter study guides available in bookstores and your local Public Library.

This test will take place in the Lower Mainland and **must be taken in person. We do not allow proctoring of this test in other locations or dates.** Once you are assigned the date and time to write the test we will not be able to accommodate requests to change the date and or time. You do not need to have attended fire school to be successful in this test.

A **recruitment file number** will also be assigned to you at this time. This **will serve as your identification number** throughout this process. Any future correspondence or inquiry must include this number. Again, due to the high volume of Candidates we are unable to provide individual feedback for each Candidate regarding the selection process.

### **Step 3. Panel Interview and Reference Checks**

The Interview consists of several types of questions including Behavioral style questions. It is an in-depth structured assessment that consists of specific selection criteria. It may include information provided from the completed "Personal History Statement". It is also an opportunity to verify some of the information provided on the application form. Our interview panel usually consists of a 3 person panel and runs approximately 1 ¼ - 1 ½ hours in length.

Reference checks are typically completed following a successful panel interview. Conducting reference checks does not necessarily indicate advancement to the next step. The Candidates overall cumulative results at this step will determine if the Candidate advances further.

### **Step 4. Vancouver Physical Assessment Skills Test (VPAST) & Ride-Along Program Orientation / Criminal Record Check**

The Vancouver Physical Assessment Skills Test will take place over a two day period. Candidates must successfully complete Day 1 in order to be invited to Day 2.

The Physical Assessment will include the following:

#### **Day 1:**

- 35ft Ladder Raise
- Beep test Level 8
- Confined Space wearing 50lb vest
- Aerial Ladder Climb wearing 50lb vest
- Rescue Dummy Drag 165lbs, wearing 50lb vest

Gloves and Hard Hat will be provided. **Candidates are expected to wear Running Shoes, comfortable sportswear and jogging pants/athletic pants (no shorts except for Beep test)**



## Day 2:

### To be completed in a continuous sequence wearing 50lb weighted vest

- Stair Climb (10 flights of stairs with high-rise pack)
- Forcible Entry Station
- Hydrant Station
- Hose Line Stations (uncharged to charged)
- Ceiling Breach and Pull
- Equipment Carry
- Rescue Dummy Drag

No previous firefighting experience is required to complete the VPAST.

Gloves and Hard Hat will be provided. Candidates are expected to wear Running Shoes, comfortable sportswear and jogging pants/athletic pants (no shorts)

### **Ride-Along Orientation**

Successful Candidates selected from the Physical/Skills Assessment will be asked to participate in a 2 day Ride-Along program. To facilitate this, all Candidates must undergo an orientation prior to the commencement of their Ride-Along. This orientation will outline safety requirements, Candidate expectations and conduct, attire and Departmental expectations.

### **Criminal Record Check**

During this stage Candidates will be required to submit a current Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check. Since Firefighters are in a position of trust, completion of a Criminal Record Check by your local Police Department will be required at your cost. You cannot have any criminal charges or convictions that are related to the duties of the position for which you have not received a pardon. You must be open, honest and willing to disclose all information pertaining to this record check.

**Price**    Approximately \$50

### **Step 5. Ride-Along Program**

Candidates chosen for the Ride-Along Program will be required to sign a Deed of Release (Waiver) to participate. Over the duration of two day shifts, the Candidate will be evaluated by two separate on-duty crews. Candidates will be evaluated on attendance, interpersonal/communication skills, motivation, performance and personal suitability. During this time the Candidate must adhere to the safety requirements and expectations outlined in their Ride-Along Orientation and as per the Officer in charge on the day.

## **Step 6. Candidate Presentations to Fire Chief, Executive Board and Human Resources**

Successful Candidates selected from the Ride-Along stage with previous accumulated results/scores, will have their application package reviewed by the Fire Chief, the Fire Chief's Executive Board and HR. Depending on VFRS staffing needs and the Fire Chief's approval, those selected Candidates will proceed to a Health and Medical Evaluation.

## **Step 7. Health and Medical Evaluation**

Candidates selected for this step must pass a Health and Medical Evaluation with the City's Occupational Health Physician. The cost for the screening will be the responsibility of the Candidate. The Occupational Health Physician is required to ensure that only those Candidates who are medically suitable for all Firefighting duties will be accepted. Please refer to NFPA 1582 Chapter 6 for Medical Suitability.

The Health and Medical Evaluation is a Physician's medical/physical screening with comprehensive medical testing that may include but is not limited to:

| <b>List of tests</b>              | <b>Details</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Blood Panel                       | Blood panel includes: Hematology, HDL Cholesterol, TSH, Urine - Macro / Microscopic SC, ALT, Total Billirubin, Calcium, Creatinine, Gamma Gt, LD, Albumn, Alkaline Phosphorous, Total Protein, AST, Urea, Uric Acid, Glucose - Fasting, Sodium, Potassium, Triglycerides, Hep b Surface Antibody, ANTI HBs. |
| Vision                            | Near, Far, Colour   |
| Resting ECG                       |   |
| Medical Exam                      | Safety Sensitive Medical  |
| TB Skin test                      |   |
| Audiogram                         | Worksafe BC   |
| Spirometry                        |   |
| Exercise Stress Electrocardiogram | If medically indicated  |
| Controlled Substance screening    |   |
| Price                             | Approximately \$500   |

## **Step 8. Fire Chief's Meeting / Job Offer**

After the Health and Medical Evaluation a final review with Human Resources of all aspects of a Candidate's application and results in all tests is conducted. The most qualified Candidates are then invited to meet the Fire Chief (or authorized designate) and an Executive Board Member from IAFF Local 18 at which time the Candidate is presented with a job offer.

## **G. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How long should my resume be and what should I include?**

Your resume will be no more than 3 pages long - not including a cover page, references or professional reference letters - in a 12 point font or larger.

Depending on your education and work experience you may not be able to list everything within 3 pages. In this case use the application to supplement anything you are unable to fit into your resume. Preferably, if you have room, include from high school graduation to current time.

### **What if my Medical license expires while my application is in process?**

Seek to get recertified as soon as possible. Your FR medical license and or other medical licenses MUST be current at the time of a job offer.

### **What if I have completed and passed a First Responder course (or higher) but will not receive my license in time to submit it on my application?**

You must provide proof of your medical license (minimum of First responder or higher equivalence) at the time of a job offer NOT application. Refer to Required Qualifications.

### **May I apply to EMALB for an extension to my FR license in order to stay current in the recruitment process?**

No. Medical license extensions are not acceptable. If your license is due to expire you must recertify for a full 3 or more years in order to have a valid license at the time of a job offer.

### **Can I apply with a Learners Class III Driver's License or higher?**

Yes. We will require you to have a valid Class III Driver's License at the time of a job offer.

### **If I have a college diploma or university degree do I still need to submit my high school transcript?**

Yes. You are still required to submit your high school transcript (not diploma).

### **What will cause my application to be screened out during the initial application process?**

Every year we screen out numerous applications because of a **lack of attention to detail** on the Candidates part when submitting the application. It is **very important to read and follow all instructions that are provided to you.** Common reasons for applications being screened out are:

- Applicant did not meet ALL of the required qualifications
- Applicant did not sign the application package/personal history statement as required
- High school transcripts were not supplied (do not submit just a high school diploma)
- Supporting documentation is missing
- Drivers abstract missing/not within the specified time period
- Questions were missed - answers were not supplied
- Error printing application - answers to questions cut off
- A page from the application is missing
- Application received after the closing deadline

**Before submission, carefully review all aspects of your application and supporting documentation to ensure YOU do not make these mistakes.**

**May I update my qualifications after I submit my application?**

Only Candidates who progress to the Interview stage will be asked to submit updated qualifications and resumes. Updated information from applicants will otherwise be requested by the Recruitment Division. Be sure to reference your Candidate number when submitting information when requested by the Recruitment Division

**How do I know if I am medically suited for a career in Firefighting? If I have a specific question relating to medical suitability - how do I get it answered?**

For specific information regarding medical suitability refer to NFPA 1582, Chapter 6. Our medical requirements are taken directly from these criteria. If you have a specific question pertaining to one of these criteria that you are unsure of after reviewing the document consult your family doctor or specialist. If you still do not have answers please contact our **Occupational Coordinator @ Medisys 604-669-8188 Ext 6225**. **The Recruitment Division is not able to provide you with answers to specific medical questions.**

**Where can I obtain NFPA 1001 certification?**

There are a number of academies across North America certified to deliver the NFPA 1001 program. If you plan on pursuing NFPA 1001 level 1-2 certifications, ensure the academy you select is International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) or Pro Board accredited. Different academies may have different offerings in terms of courses offered, length of programs and price. Select the academy that works best for you.

**Does VFRS have a preference in terms of which academy I attend to receive NFPA 1001 certification?**

No. We do not favor one academy over another. As long as you receive NFPA 1001 level 1-2 certification that is IFSAC and/or Pro board accredited you should select the academy that best suits your needs.

### **What can I do to prepare for the Written Test?**

You can use Firefighter study guides available in bookstores, your local public library, online resources and such as Fire & Police Selection Inc. website:

<http://www.fpsi.com/>

The purpose of a guide is to help you identify your areas of strength and weakness so you know where to focus your time during preparation for the test. Choose the study guide that best suits your needs.

### **Are there particular courses / training that VFRS recommends to become a Firefighter?**

Each Candidate needs to be familiar with our Required Qualifications and Preferred Qualifications. Based on these criteria a Candidate needs to determine for themselves what courses/training would be beneficial for them. Once you have, or on the way to having the Required Qualifications, focus on the Preferred Qualifications. See what you DON'T have or may be weak in. That will give you a good idea where you need to focus your efforts on.

### **Is it necessary to volunteer in the City of Vancouver and does VFRS have any volunteer positions?**

No. VFRS does not have any volunteer Firefighter positions. Firefighters are committed to their communities and we look for a strong volunteer history in our Applicants.

### **What does VFRS recommend for volunteer activities?**

Volunteer in a program or an event where you can gain skills and knowledge that can be utilized in your personal and work life. Volunteering does not have to be firefighting related as long as you're serving the community and has meaning for you.

### **May I apply if I reside outside of Canada?**

Yes. However, if you are applying from outside of Canada **you must be a Canadian Citizen, Landed Immigrant or have Permanent Resident status in Canada to be considered.** A work visa will not suffice.

### **Do I need to come to a VFRS Information Session if I have been to one in the past?**

We encourage all Candidates to attend one information session per year if they are able. However attending information sessions does not give you an advantage over other Candidates as all the information presented can be found through other sources. (Webpage, Guide for Applicants, etc.)

**Am I required to provide professional letters of reference with my application?**

It is not mandatory but preferred that you provide letters of professional reference with your application. If you are going to include them please ensure that they are professional references only, no personal character reference letters.

**Please Note: All testing throughout the Recruitment process takes place in in the Lower Mainland and all Applicants must attend in person.**

**There will be no proctoring of any stage of the Recruitment process for out of province applicants.**

**PLEASE RETAIN THIS INFORMATION FOR REFERENCE DURING THE SELECTION PROCESS**

If you have any questions that are not answered in this guide please e-mail Vancouver Fire Rescue Services, Recruitment & Outreach Division at:

E-mail: [fire.recruitment@vancouver.ca](mailto:fire.recruitment@vancouver.ca)

Website: [vancouver.ca/firejobs](http://vancouver.ca/firejobs)

We will make every effort to respond to e-mails as soon as possible. We thank you for your patience especially during application intake periods as we receive a high volume of e-mails/questions.