

PEOPLE
PURPOSE
PASSION

Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services Guide for Applicants



October 3, 2018

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 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. 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 and have knowledge 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

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 and 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:

1. **Transcripts** demonstrating high school or GED completion (**NOT diploma**)
2. **Transcripts** demonstrating 30 post-secondary credits or completion of 1 year trade apprenticeship. If you have the NFPA 1001 Level I & II, with appropriate IFSAC / Pro Board Seals, they will be recognized as 20 post-secondary credits.

“Unofficial” transcripts are acceptable as long as they are legible and clearly show the Institution name and the educational credits awarded. They must also clearly identify the applicant.

***High school and post-secondary 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.**

Military training and qualifications will be recognized as post-secondary credits on a case by case basis. Applicants with Military service are required to submit a valid Military Personnel Record Resume (MPRR) or the equivalent from their Country of service in order to have their service assessed for educational credit equivalence for the purpose of the VFRS recruitment process.

The **BCIT Legion Military Skills Conversion Program** can assist in identifying Credit hours for candidates with Canadian, British, Australian or United States Military Service:

Contact them by e-mail at bcit_legion@bcit.ca

Assessments from BCIT must still be submitted along with a valid MPRR (or national equivalent).

3. 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.
4. Valid Class 3 Driver's License 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.

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

5. A valid Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) certificate from an IAFF licensed provider dated within 12 months prior to the application closing date.

The CPAT Certificate must be maintained throughout the application process. For a list of IAFF licensed CPAT providers refer to <http://www.iaff.org/HS/Well/statelist.htm>

No alternative test results will be accepted.

6. Two years of accumulated work experience after the completion of high school.
7. 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. *Note: If you have the older style card license, please include both front and back 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

D. PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

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

1. Completion of NFPA 1001, Level I and II with appropriate IFSAC or Pro Board Seals (see www.ifsac.org or www.TheProBoard.org for a list of accredited fire academies).
2. Completion of other fire service related courses or programs. We do not recommend any course/ program in particular.
3. Practical experience transferable to areas of firefighting:
 - Experience/training in Emergency Services: Fire, Police, Coast Guard, EMS, Military, Search and Rescue 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
 - Knowledge of different cultures/fluency in languages other than English/Travel experience
 - Coaching, teaching 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

E. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applications will be available to download from our webpage only during 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 delivered to us by Canada Post or other courier service (FEDEX, UPS, Purolator etc.)

Applications will not be accepted if dropped off in person.

Due to the high volume of applications we receive we are unable to confirm receipt of each application with individual candidates. Applications must be mailed or delivered by a courier that allows the candidate to track the delivery of the application package.

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.

Please Note: The Department will not consider applications from persons who have been **unsuccessful in three or more interviews** with Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services.

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 candidate regarding the selection process.

Step 2. Written Test

Short listed applicants 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.

Applicants may purchase a copy of the **“NFST Candidate Orientation Guide”** from the Fire & Police Selection Inc. website:

<http://www.fpsi.com/fire-orientation-guide-download-disclaimer>

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 Vancouver and **must be taken in person**. We do not allow proctoring of this test in other locations. Once you are assigned a 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 applicants 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.

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

Step 4. Skills Evaluation & Ride-Along Program Orientation / Criminal Record Check

The Skills Evaluation may include but is not limited to:

- Raising and lowering a 35 foot Ground Ladder in a safe and controlled manner
- Climb to top of a fully extended Aerial Ladder
- Hose handling skills
- Donning and doffing an SCBA
- Primary search wearing SCBA
- Handling Hydraulic Spreader/Cutter

***No previous firefighting experience is required to complete the Skills Evaluation.**

Ride-Along Orientation

Successful candidates selected from the Skills Evaluation 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.

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. Candidates will keep a journal of their activities and submit them to the fire hall Captain at the conclusion of their participation.

Candidates will be involved with a variety of activities which may include:

- Observing/attending emergency calls
- Fire Hall & Equipment maintenance
- Training scenarios
- Company inspections
- Apparatus and equipment checks

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

Successful candidates selected from the Ride-Along stage 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: urinalysis, vision test - colour vision, tuberculosis test, audiometry, pulmonary function studies, treadmill exercise stress test and a substance abuse test.

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 reference letters - and 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.

What if my Medical license or CPAT certification expires while my application is in process?

FR3 and other medical licenses as well as CPAT certification MUST be kept current as long as you wish to remain in our recruitment process. Renew these as necessary and e-mail us updated copies for your application file.

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

If you have passed your First Responders Level III Licensing or higher and you are waiting for your Medical License card to come in the mail in order to provide your **license number** and **expiry date**, in the interim, you must contact Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board (EMALB) and ask for a letter confirming **these two items** and submit it in your application.

May I apply to EMALB for an extension to my FR3 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 years in order to remain in our process.

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

No. We will not accept any form of Learners Driver's License at the time of application.

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)
- Post-secondary **transcripts** proving 30 credits were not supplied
- Military documentation incomplete/post-secondary equivalencies not provided
- Supporting documentation is missing
- Drivers abstract missing/not within the specified time period
- Copy of First aid license not supplied (**Front and Back**)
- First aid certificate supplied instead of license
- First aid license has expired
- 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.

If I have only partially completed or will receive any of the required certifications/licenses AFTER the application closing date can I still submit an application?

No. In order to submit an application you must meet **ALL** of the **required qualifications** at the time of submission (prior to the application closing date). Any application that is submitted **WITHOUT ALL** of the **required qualifications** at the time of submission will be screened out.

May I update my qualifications after I submit my application?

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

My education took place in a country other than Canada and the credit system is not the same - what do I do?

Applicants who have completed their education outside of North America need to contact a Credential Assessment and Qualification Recognition Service to have their **Post-Secondary education** background transferred to the Canadian system of credits. Please visit the following website to obtain more information about this process.

http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca/content_pieces-eng.do?cid=223

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. **We are 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 certification 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 the 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 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 and online 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.

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.

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.

Should I come to an VFRS Information Session if I have been to one in the past?

We encourage all candidates to attend one information session 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 letters of reference with my application?

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

Please Note: All testing throughout the recruitment process takes place in Vancouver 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

Website: 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.