

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUIT APPLICATION HANDBOOK



"Prevent, Protect, Serve"

MISSION STATEMENT

Everything we do, we do for the people and the communities we proudly serve. With education and training we prevent harm. With rapid and professional response, we protect lives and property. Through our desire to serve and courage to act, we are the model of a successful fire and rescue agency for the State of Oregon.

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Prepared In
January 2013

DEAR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUIT APPLICANT:

This pamphlet was developed for Volunteer Firefighter Recruit applicants. It explains what the job involves and how to prepare for the examinations and the job interview. Adequate preparation and familiarization with the various parts of the examination process will improve your chances of being successful.

If you are serious about an interesting and self fulfilling position as a Volunteer Firefighter, you are urged to prepare as thoroughly as possible for the physical ability test and the interview.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Forest Grove Fire & Rescue and Cornelius Fire Department both endorse the basic national policy on equal employment opportunities and affirmative action and all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The policies and law, state that all citizens (employees or applicants for employment) are entitled to equal opportunities regardless of race, religion, color, age, sex, disability (as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act), national origin, marital status, sexual preference, ancestry, or any other legally protected status, in employment, compensation, promotion, upgrading, training and development, demotion, transfer, lay-off, termination, or re-hire of personnel.

The City will make reasonable accommodations, wherever it does not cause undue hardship on the operation of either Forest Grove Fire & Rescue or Cornelius Fire Department, to allow persons with disabilities to perform work for which they are otherwise qualified.

WHAT IS THE JOB OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER REALLY LIKE?

Firefighting is an extremely difficult and demanding profession, both physically and mentally. The job requires each member to be able to do a variety of duties. This can range from fighting fires in structures with temperatures approaching 1000°F or more, being able to remove severely injured people from auto accidents, treating people with critical medical conditions or trauma, to

delivering babies. The conditions that you will work under vary greatly and often are the worst conditions imaginable. The one characteristic that is most associated with a successful Firefighter is the willingness to help others, regardless of the time of day or the assistance needed.

The physical and mental demands of firefighting are sometimes underestimated. Demanding physical standards are absolutely necessary because firefighting requires high levels of physical fitness and mental alertness.

At present, Firefighters must also be good students to stay up with the technologies and changes in fire prevention, suppression, hazardous materials, rescue and medical procedures. This involves many subjects, such as Public Education, Arson Investigation, Emergency Medical and Transportation Procedures. Therefore, high levels of physical and mental fitness are essential for Firefighters to meet the demands of the job.

WHAT IF I JUST WANT TO HELP THE COMMUNITY BUT DON'T WANT TO PUT OUT FIRES AND THE SIGHT OF BLOOD MAKES ME SICK?

Individuals not wanting to volunteer in an emergency operations role may elect to be a Firefighter Support Volunteer. Duties will vary per assigned area of service:

Community Service & Public Education
Activities may include participation in community events such as parades, educational booths, and other community liaison functions.

General Assistance including data entry, record maintenance, rural address sign program, fire rehab, etc.

Antique Apparatus Program Assist in the maintenance and repair function of the current antique fleet and participate in community events such as antique auto displays and parades.

Ham Radio Support Assist in the operation and maintenance of our Ham radio system

HOW CAN I BECOME A VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUIT?

First, complete an online application (<http://agency.governmentjobs.com/forestgrove/default.cfm>). Applicants must pass a background investigation, a Physical Ability Test and a Fire Department Interview.

***** Support Volunteers do not need to pass a Physical Ability Test or participate in the Firefighter Recruit Academy.**

WHAT ARE OUR DEPARTMENT VALUES?

We achieve our mission and vision by building upon our core values and being loyal to our duty to serve. We work with a continued focus in the direction of leadership and excellence. Our defining core values include Professionalism, Teamwork, Leadership, Compassion, Integrity and Service Excellence. We hold ourselves accountable to these values.

Professionalism

We believe our professionalism defines who we are. We believe in honor, competency, integrity and outstanding public service to the community.

We strive to be positive role models for future generations of firefighters and continue the legacy of service excellence.

Teamwork and Leadership

We believe all individuals have the capacity to lead and our organization values leadership at all levels. Our lives depend on a well-functioning team of people. Teamwork and shared leadership are integral to our organization. We seek out and value the opinions of our members.

Compassion

We believe in caring for our community members who are suffering from significant events in their lives, and with mercy and compassion, we do all that is possible to assist in stabilizing the situation.

Integrity

We believe in living by moral and ethical principles. We understand the trust placed in us by the public and our colleagues is integral to the performance of our duties. We are honorable to our profession and we inspire each other to maintain trustworthiness and openness in all our activities.

Service Excellence

We believe the pursuit of excellence and demonstrated high professional standards are critical to our work. To ensure the best possible service to our community, we do all we can to meet the needs of our neighbors through a committed, competent and well trained efficient agency.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS AND SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS?

- High School Diploma or equivalent
- 18 years of age or older
- United States citizen
- Signed Liability Release Form
- Applicant (Combat/Intern) must be physically capable of:
 - Bending and stretching in order to accomplish tasks of pushing, pulling, grasping and carrying of objects having a weight of 50 pounds or more.
 - Donning and wearing approximately 50 pounds of protective clothing and self-contained breathing apparatus.
 - Engaging in crawling, walking, climbing, prying, chopping, and carrying scenarios.
 - Occasionally dragging weights up to 175 pounds for sixty feet in sixty seconds.

- Climbing ladders varying in length from 14' to 104'.
- Withstanding periods of overheating and chilling, oftentimes in wet clothing.
- Applicant must be mentally capable of:
 - Demonstrating knowledge of elementary physics, chemistry, mechanics, math and reading comprehension.
 - Functioning as part of a team at all times.
 - Speak clearly and understandably.
 - Maintaining a valid Oregon Drivers License.
- No felony convictions.

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER?

Applications may be obtained from the City of Cornelius or at the City of Forest Grove Website:

<http://agency.governmentjobs.com/forestgrove/default.cfm>

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND CHECK?

Background information will be obtained by checking:

- 1) Driving history through the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles
- 2) Criminal history through the Oregon State Police.
- 3) References

WHAT TYPE OF TEST DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE?

The exam process consists of two tests; the Physical Ability Test and the Fire Department Interview.

Physical Ability Test: This test is designed to test endurance and the ability to perform basic strenuous tasks that professional firefighters must perform. The test consists of an acrophobia test (fear of heights), a claustrophobia test (fear of confined spaces), and a five-task timed test that simulates actual tasks

performed on the job. This part of the physical ability test is a timed test. A time of 10 minutes or less is needed to pass the test.

Applicants will perform part of the test (the five task section) wearing a 40 lb weight vest. The total weight of the protective equipment that is donned during many fires is approximately 40 pounds.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER EACH EXAM?

A Fire Department orientation and walk through will be scheduled so applicants can go through the physical ability test before the final test date.

At the completion of the physical ability test, applicants will be advised of their physical abilities test time. A Fire Department Interview will also be scheduled at this time.

THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST

Do not take the physical ability test lightly. It is more difficult than it appears. This is a timed test. Your chances for scoring a faster time will be greatly increased if adequate preparatory training has been undertaken.

It must be emphasized that regardless of a person's level of fitness, he should be in good health before beginning any physical training program. Preparation for the physical ability test can be accomplished by a physical training program that emphasizes cardiorespiratory (heart-lung) fitness, strength and endurance. It is especially important that small-framed individuals and individuals whose jobs do not require physical exertion prepare more conscientiously for the test. Generally these individuals are not in as high a level of physical fitness and have less strength than more physically active people. However, most people can improve their level of physical fitness through an intensive training program that includes running for cardiorespiratory fitness, and weight lifting to develop muscular strength.

Applicants tend to underestimate the difficulty of the physical ability test and the effects it can have on them physically.

To minimize negative effects, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Drink plenty of water 1 to 2 hours prior to the ability test.
2. Completely avoid the consumption of alcoholic beverages for at least 48 hours prior to the test.
3. Avoid the use of any over-the-counter medication for 48 hours. In particular, you should avoid all aspirin and aspirin-containing products as well as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents (Advil, Nuprin, Motrin, Medipren, and Midol, to name a few). In addition, you should avoid products containing acetaminophen (Tylenol), and decongestants, cold pills and diuretics.
4. Avoid strenuous exercise for 48 hours prior to the ability test.

WHAT IS CARDIORESPIRATORY FITNESS?

Cardiorespiratory fitness is the ability of the heart to deliver oxygen to the muscles and other tissues. This is called the aerobic power. Simply stated, the ability to perform exercise and / or physical work is directly dependent upon how well the body delivers oxygen to the working muscles. A highly fit person will be able to deliver large amounts of oxygen to the muscles and therefore be capable of prolonged muscular exercise (for example, fighting fires). On the other hand, the out-of-shape individual will not be capable of delivering adequate amounts of oxygen to the muscles and therefore will fatigue and be forced to stop working much sooner.

WHAT ABOUT MUSCULAR STRENGTH?

Strength can be defined as the ability to apply force. Since nearly all movements are performed against some resistance, a certain degree of muscular strength is needed to perform any activity. Firefighters perform activities against much greater resistance than the average individual. Therefore, the Firefighter must necessarily have above-average muscular strength, endurance and power in order to effectively and safely handle firefighting equipment and perform the duties of a Firefighter.

WHAT ABOUT BODY BUILD?

An excess accumulation of body fat is undesirable for a variety of reasons. From a

health standpoint, medical problems exist in which obesity, or “over-fatness” is considered a risk factor, and for which a reduction in excess fat is desirable. From a physical performance standpoint, excess fat is like carrying dead weight and can only hinder physical performance. Since firefighting requires nearly maximal effort from the heart and other related tissues, additional fat weight adds an extra burden to the cardiovascular system and, thus, the over-fat Firefighter puts himself/herself in a potentially dangerous situation when fighting fires.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST

An orientation and walk through will be given by a test administrator to interested applicants prior to the actual examination. Applicants must understand what is expected of them before being allowed to take the test. Each candidate will try on the backpack and adjust the strap as necessary to ensure it is comfortable. Examinations will take place only as weather permits. Additional information is listed below.

1. A 40 lb weight vest, which is provided, shall be worn throughout the course of the five task portion of the physical abilities examination. In addition, candidates are encouraged to wear long pants (jeans, sweat pants) and required to wear sport shoes/boots with no open toe. Shorts are allowed.
2. Candidates unable to successfully complete the aerial climb will not be allowed to continue the testing process.
3. Prior to commencement of the claustrophobia test, the candidate will don a zero visibility face piece.
4. During the five task timed test, there are no breaks or rest periods provided.
5. When time for the five task timed test is exceeded, the candidate will be informed and the physical ability examination will be terminated.
6. There will be at least one test monitor at each station.

7. All events must be performed safely and as designated.

The events include the following:

FEAR OF HEIGHTS (ACROPHOBIA)

Requirement: Climb an extended 104' ladder, while being set at a 70 degree climbing angle, from the turntable to the aerial platform.

Procedure: Candidates are required to climb to the top of the raised ladder. The candidate shall enter the platform of the department's aerial truck with a trained test administrator manning the platform. The test administrator shall secure the applicant into a climbing harness and belay rope for fall protection. The candidate will safely climb ladder without any extended breaks. Pauses to confirm hand or foot placement are allowed. The candidate will reach the top of the ladder and take a small break as allowed by the belay monitor stationed in the aerial bucket. The candidate is then to descend the ladder with only pauses allowed to confirm hand or foot placement until he or she step onto the aerial platform at the base of the ladder. This part of the test is not timed. Inability to fully climb the ladder or excessive stops during the ascent or descent will cause the candidate to fail. Candidate will be given only one chance to complete this task. (See Appendix #1).

Upon successful completion of the Fear of Heights (Acrophobia) test, the candidate will begin the five task timed test. An applicant must walk as quickly as possible between tasks but cannot run. Running will disqualify a candidate. Candidate will be given only one chance to complete this task. Keep in mind that these tasks are performed while wearing a 40 lb weight vest simulating approximately 40 pounds of protective firefighting clothes and gear.

FIVE -TASK TIMED TEST

All timed events must be completed in a series. There are no breaks between events. With each candidate there will be a test monitor giving verbal instructions throughout. A time of **10 minutes or less** is needed to pass this portion of the exam.

1. **HOSE BUNDLE CARRY/HOSE HOIST:**

Requirement: Carry a 1 ¾" hose bundle through a designated course, including ascending and descending stairs. Hoist a 2 ½" hose roll.

Procedure: The candidate places a hose bundle on either shoulder and goes up the East stairs, goes through the day room, down the West stairs, out to the apparatus bay and up to a mezzanine. The candidate will set the hose bundle down in a controlled manner on the marked location.

1. The candidate will use the utility rope to hoist and lower a 50 ft. roll of 2½" hose two times.
2. The candidate will place the hose bundle on either shoulder and return it to the starting point and set it down in a controlled manner on the marked location.
3. The station ends when the candidate has returned the hose bundle to the original starting point.
4. While ascending/descending the stairs, the candidate must step on each riser tread and not skip steps. Use of the handrails is permitted.
5. The candidate may not receive assistance in lifting the hose bundle or setting it down.
6. The candidate may not set the hose bundle down at any point except for on the marked locations.

Job Relatedness: Firefighters at fire scenes are often required to move various hoselines into and throughout different structures while at various elevations.

2. HOSE EXTENSION:

Requirement: Extend 150' of uncharged (no water in hose) 2 ½" hose, it's full length and then retract all hose back to the starting point.

Procedure: Three sections of 2½" hose (150' – all connected) will be flaked next to the hydrant behind a start/finish line.

1. The candidate will fully connect the female end to the 2½" hydrant port, then fully connect the nozzle to the male end of the hose.
2. The candidate will drape the nozzle over either shoulder and fully extend the hose to a marked target.
3. The candidate will disconnect the nozzle from the hose and return to

the hydrant bringing only the nozzle back to the hydrant.

4. The candidate will remain behind the start/finish line and pull all of the hose back behind the start/finish line. The candidate will then disconnect the hose from the hydrant and set the coupling on the ground next to the hydrant.
5. The station ends when the candidate has set the coupling on the ground.

Job-Relatedness: 2 ½" hose is carried on all Forest Grove Fire & Rescue engines. A firefighter occupying the nozzle position on an engine is responsible for extending the hoseline to the point of fire attack.

3. LADDER EXTENSION:

Requirement: Fully raise (extend) the top (fly) section of the 24' extension ladder and safely lower it completely by using the attached rope (halyard).

Procedure: A 24' extension ladder will be placed on the ground with the butt of the ladder against the hose tower.

1. The candidate will flat raise the ladder so it is flat against the hose tower.
2. Using the halyard in a hand-over-hand method, the candidate will fully extend the ladder then fully retract the ladder. The candidate must maintain control of the halyard and not let the halyard slip through their hands (one warning will be given).
3. The candidate will lower the ladder back to the ground.
4. The station ends when the ladder is returned to the ground.
5. Two firefighters will be present to ensure that the ladder is not dropped while raising and lowering. The firefighters may not assist in raising or lowering the ladder.
6. The two firefighters will steady the ladder and hold it against the hose tower during extension and retraction of the ladder (entry tests only).

Job-Relatedness: All Forest Grove Fire & Rescue engines carry 24 foot extension

ladders. A firefighter must have the ability to safely and quickly raise, extend, and lower the top section of the 24 foot extension ladder at emergency scenes. This task is performed by one person using the hand-over-hand method. Allowing the rope to slip through the hands is unsafe and could result in personal injury and / or damage to the ladder.

4. DUMMY DRAG:

Requirement: The applicant must drag (not carry) the dummy (approx. 150lb) by using a rescue strap attached to it.

Procedure: The dummy will be placed behind a start/finish line. The dummy will have a strap attached to it to be used for dragging it.

1. The candidate will drag the dummy 25 feet, around a 55 gallon foam barrel and back to the start/finish line. The entire dummy must be dragged across the start/finish line.
2. The station will end once the entire dummy has been dragged back across the start/finish line.

Job-Relatedness: When performing a rescue in a fire situation, most adults are not carried from the building, but rather, a firefighter drags them. This task is commonly completed by one firefighter.

5.AIR/WATER EXTINGUISHMENT CARRY:

Requirement: Carry two extinguishers 150' without stopping.

Job Procedure: Two air/water extinguishers each weighing approximately 30 lbs. will be placed at a start/finish line.

1. The candidate will carry them (one in each hand) 75 feet, around a cone and back to the start/finish line.
2. The candidate may not set the extinguishers down in the middle of the course. The extinguishers must be carried the entire length in one attempt.
3. The station will end once the candidate has set the extinguishers down back at the start/finish line.

4. Dropping one or both of the extinguishers will disqualify the candidate.

*******The time portion of the test ends when the candidate sets the extinguishers down*******

Job Relatedness: Fire extinguishers are carried on all types of Forest Grove Fire and Rescue apparatus. The candidate needs to demonstrate the ability to be mobile with this equipment.

FEAR OF CONFINEMENT (CLAUSTROPHOBIA)

Requirement: Demonstrate the ability to function effectively in a potentially claustrophobic atmosphere.

Procedure: Candidates will be assisted in putting on a zero visibility face piece. Candidates are required to exit a room by crawling on their hands and knees while wearing a zero visibility face piece. The candidates shall be wearing the zero visibility face piece before they are led into the room (See Appendix #2).

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

This step is often overlooked by many applicants and, in reality, is the first thing you should do in preparation for the Firefighter Recruit Test. The oral interview panel should consist of a combination of firefighters and officers. There should be a minimum of 3 people on this panel. A 5 person interview panel is preferable. The interview panel will have a list of questions to ask each candidate and grade each candidate based on their response. You should find out as much as you possibly can about Forest Grove Fire & Rescue and the job of a firefighter. The best way to obtain this information is to visit your local fire station during normal working hours (8:00am to 4:00pm). The Fire Department encourages everyone to spend some time talking to Firefighters, because they know, and are willing to explain, what the job is about. In addition, ask any Firefighter on duty questions regarding what the department expects from its Firefighters, the Fire Department organizational structure, compensation, different assignments, etc. You will need this information in order to convince the interview panel that you have

the ability and a real interest in a position as a Firefighter with Forest Grove Fire & Rescue. Candidates should provide an adequate response to each question for the interview panel to accept them into the program. One and two word responses to interview questions are not considered adequate. The interview panel will evaluate the candidate's answers to questions using the score sheet provided and discussion amongst the group to determine if the candidate should be accepted into the program.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM ACCEPTED AS A VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RECRUIT?

Academy: You will be enrolled in a Firefighter Recruit Academy that is hosted by Washington County Training Association. This academy takes two months of commitment that includes weekend daytime classes and occasional week night classes (approx. 170 hours broken down between 25 different classes throughout the two-month period). Forest Grove Fire & Rescue and Cornelius Fire Department will provide recruits with needed clothing and equipment for the Academy.

Further Volunteer training/expectations:

Once a recruit has successfully graduated from the Recruit Academy he or she will be given a pager if the recruit lives within the boundary of Forest Grove or Cornelius city and rural borders. If you are an "Out of District" Volunteer you will have the option to program your cell phone with Forest Grove Fire & Rescue/Cornelius Fire Department alert and notification system. We conduct Monday night (7pm-9:30pm) drills in which attendance is required. Make-up drills are allowed due to sickness or prescheduled absences. Recruits are also required to meet 24 hours of minimum emergency response or "ride-a-long" time per month. Volunteers are also encouraged to participate in community events Forest Grove Fire and Rescue supports.

Compensation

- The knowledge and acknowledgement that you are a vital part of the fire and emergency response team in your community.

- Opportunity to become an EMS First Responder or EMT Basic.
- Attaining progressively higher skill set certification, such as Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, or Pump Operator, fully paid by the department.
- Obtaining new and specialized skills through in-house training, area-wide training and possible attendance at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.
- Participating in specialized department programs, including fire prevention and rural signage.
- Leadership training for qualified individuals as training program instructors and officers.
- Earning \$10 per incident response and \$9 per Monday night drill

APPENDIX

#1 Aerial Climb Failure Criteria:

Any panic-like behavior observed by the test monitor such as failure to continuously climb the ladder, stopping because of fear or physical exhaustion, or verbal expression of concern or fear by the applicant.

#2 Claustrophobia Test Failure Criteria:

- 1) Removal of zero visibility face-piece.
- 2) Standing during the exit process.
- 3) Any panic-like behavior observed by the test monitor such as failure to follow instructions of test monitor, verbal expression of concern or fear by the candidate, or excessively quick non-productive movements by the candidate.

FURTHER QUESTIONS?

Contact: Lt. Tad Buckingham OD, EMT-P
FGF&R
Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Coordinator
Direct# (503) 992-3195
tbuckingham@forestgrove-or.gov

or

Contact: Lt. Phil Duncan EMT B
CFD
Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Coordinator
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