

NSW **FIRE** BRIGADES

CLIMB THE LADDER TO A SATISFYING CAREER

The Role of a Firefighter



www.fire.nsw.gov.au



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Introduction

The purpose of the NSW Fire Brigades is to enhance community safety, quality of life and confidence by minimising the impact of hazards and emergency incidents on the people, environment and economy of New South Wales. As one of the world's largest urban fire and rescue services, we manage fire emergencies in NSW's major cities and towns. We respond to rescues, hazardous materials incidents and possible terrorism activities across the State. We work with other Government agencies to minimise the impact of bushfires, storms, floods, landslides, building collapses, motor vehicle accidents and other emergencies. We also run prevention and preparedness programs to prevent these emergencies and reduce their impact on the community.

1. What is a permanent firefighter?

A permanent firefighter is a full-time firefighter. Permanent firefighters not only fight fires but also encounter situations involving flammable or hazardous materials, recovery after storm and flood, fire prevention and investigation, motor vehicle accidents, rescues and community education.

Permanent firefighters work in a fire station as part of a platoon. Each fire station has four platoons on rotating shifts, with platoons supervised by a Station Officer. Platoons contain anywhere between three to 12 firefighters of various ranks, depending on the size and nature of the fire station.

Each fire station is part of a Zone containing between nine and 27 fire stations and headed by a Zone Commander. These Zones are then grouped in Areas (North, South, East and West) headed by a Area Commander.

All firefighters begin in the position of recruit firefighter. They only become a "Qualified" firefighter after they have satisfactorily completed initial training and on-going study and assessment based on identified competencies. This process of learning and assessment takes a minimum of four years.

The NSW Fire Brigades has a long tradition of excellence in the protection of life, property and the environment. It is made up of around 14,000 people Statewide, comprised of over 7,000 retained and permanent firefighters and support staff, plus around 7,000 community fire unit volunteers. All of these people are committed to maintaining the NSWFB's proud history and tradition of serving and protecting the community.



2. Explore the different activities a firefighter undertakes

Firefighting involves both suppression and prevention of fires to minimise their impact on the community.

Firefighters protect a range of properties including high rise and medium density buildings, residential buildings, docks, hospitals, airports, ports, major industrial complexes, oil refineries, commercial developments, shopping complexes, educational institutions, rail systems and bushland.

The geographical area for which individual stations are responsible varies from relatively small areas in the inner city of Sydney to larger areas in outer suburban and country areas. The size depends on the density, risks contained in the area and time of response.

When a fire breaks out, firefighters carry out a range of activities. For example, the driver drives the crew to the scene, stays with the vehicle, maintains and monitors water flow and keeps the breathing apparatus tally board. Under the direction of the Station Officer, the driver makes reports by radio to the Communication Centre.

Firefighters other than the driver use the appropriate equipment to extinguish a fire. They may be required to enter affected buildings using breathing apparatus.

Depending on the situation, firefighters may also undertake rescues and administer basic first aid until the accredited provider, such as Ambulance NSW, arrives.

Firefighters need to work effectively in a diverse range of incidents. No two incidents are the same and firefighters need to be able to choose the correct procedure to apply in each situation. Set procedures are in place but they need to be applied differently depending on the circumstance and in a time-critical environment.

Firefighters often operate in stressful situations, particularly when people are injured or threatened with injury. When attending an incident, firefighters may be required to comfort victims or advise the public to stay clear of the area.

Firefighting is physically and psychologically demanding, especially during major emergencies, and involves quick thinking, team work and endurance.

Other responsibilities include delivering a range of fire prevention activities to increase public preparedness and awareness of fire safety, and carrying out building inspections to prepare risk assessments and pre-incident plans.

Values

Firefighters also need to display the following values and characteristics:

- Honesty and integrity
- Physical and mental capacity to meet initial and ongoing training and development requirements
- Professionalism
- Commitment to community service
- The ability to work cooperatively in a team
- Excellent communication skills.



3. Career opportunities

The NSWFB operates on a rank structure and each firefighter has the opportunity to progress through these ranks. Firefighters may also have the opportunity to work in a variety of specialised areas which include the following.

Community Safety

The NSWFB seeks to prevent emergencies and to prepare and assist the community to recover from such events through a wide range of community engagement, education and awareness programs and activities. Community Safety staff help to coordinate the NSWFB's prevention activities,

which include smoke alarm promotions, fire safety education to children, road safety education to high school students, seasonal fire safety activities, public information campaigns, community events, and visits to homes and businesses.

Fire Research and Investigation

The Fire Research and Investigation Unit (FIRU) undertakes special fire investigations, delivers fire investigation training; manages accelerant detection canines; and carries out research into the interaction between human behaviour, building behaviour and

fire behaviour. FIRU works to identify, analyse and evaluate key fire risks, and then disseminates this information within the NSWFB as well as to other government agencies, research and tertiary organisations.

Operational Communications

The NSWFB maintains a network of four emergency call-taking, dispatch, co-ordination and communication centres located at Alexandria Newcastle, Wollongong and Katoomba. These centres employ around 140 operational, technical and administrative support staff and manage all fire emergency calls in NSW. Most calls originate from

either 000 phone calls or from automatic or other fire alarms. The centres employ a sophisticated computer-aided dispatch system and sometimes also dispatch NSW Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service personnel.

Training and Development

The NSWFB's Professional Development Unit (PDU) provides, delivers and implements a full range of professional development and promotional programs using both internal and external resources. Relevant programs are offered to administrative staff as well as operational staff. The PDU develops training and education pathways for use throughout

the organisation in the provision of career, training, and education guidance to management and staff. PDU works closely with the Quality Education Division which develops and provides educational resources, information and assistance.

Hazardous Materials Response

The NSWFB manages emergency incidents involving hazardous materials (hazmat) throughout NSW, including transport accidents, industrial leaks, spills and fires involving hazardous materials, as well as incidents involving chemical, biological and radiological substances. The Hazardous Materials Response Unit has six Heavy Hazmat units and 21 Intermediate Hazmat units, and supports firefighters

at fire stations in the management of hazardous materials incidents. Firefighters becoming Hazmat technicians undergo special training in Hazmat operations, detection, waterways operations, personal protective equipment, dangerous goods regulations, toxicology for firefighters and atmospheric monitoring.

Rescue

The NSWFB is the largest provider of rescue services in NSW, with 169 accredited rescue units and over 1800 accredited rescue operators across metropolitan and regional areas. The Rescue Section provided equipment and training to NSWFB rescue operators to perform a wide range of rescues, including rescuing people and animals from transport,

domestic and industrial accidents and carrying out swiftwater, alpine, vertical and confined spaces rescues. The NSWFB is the lead agency for rescue operations involving major building collapse in NSW and has developed a nationally and internationally recognised capability in this area.

Counter-Terrorism and Aviation

The NSWFB's Counter-Terrorism and Aviation Unit contributes to the planning, development and implementation of the State's capability to ensure operational readiness for, and rapid resolution of, the consequences of terrorism throughout NSW.

It also jointly manages the NSWFB's aviation capability (the Fire Air 1 helicopter) to effectively support management of terrorism and other major incidents within the State.

Commercial Safety

ComSafe is the commercial business unit of the NSWFB. Services provided range from the hiring of firefighting personnel and fire trucks/equipment for TV/film productions through to the delivery of nationally accredited training programs. This training enables companies and organisations to safely react to emergency situations within their workplaces

prior to and following the arrival of responding emergency services. ComSafe deliver, on average, over 2,500 training programs and other services to approximately 30,000 people each year.



4. Pay rates and entitlements

Leave entitlements

Firefighters have entitlements to sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, parental leave, consolidated leave and long service leave. Long service leave entitlement is two months after ten years service, however it is able to be accessed pro-rata after seven years service. Previous Government service may be transferable.

As a recruit firefighter your four-week annual leave may not be taken until you have completed between 44 and 54 weeks of full time employment. You will then revert to the typical cycle for annual leave which is: 24 weeks worked = four weeks leave, the next 32 weeks worked = four weeks leave. Firefighters are rostered into a leave group at the time the appointment is confirmed, and leave is taken when the group's leave period falls due.

Shift system

The NSWFB is a 24-hour emergency service. Firefighters work rostered shifts, which include weekends and public holidays if your shift falls on those days. The rosters are as follows:

- 10/14 Roster - firefighters work two day shifts (8am-6pm), followed by two night shifts (6pm-8am) and then four days off.
- Back-to-Back Roster - firefighters work four day shifts (6am-6pm) then four days off.
- Special Roster - firefighters work Monday to Thursday (8am-4.30pm) and Friday (8am-4pm).
- Firefighters can be recalled to the job in case of an emergency.

Rates of pay (from 29 August 2008)

Classification	Rate of Pay (\$)	Roster Allowance (\$)	Total Weekly Pay (\$)
Recruit Firefighter	\$918.13	\$00.00	\$918.13
Firefighter Level 1	\$1,020.15	\$44.63	\$1,064.78
Firefighter Level 2	\$1,076.84	\$47.11	\$1,123.95
Qualified Firefighter	\$1,133.51	\$49.59	\$1,183.10
Senior Firefighter	\$1,178.87	\$51.58	\$1,230.45
Leading Firefighter	\$1,269.55	\$55.54	\$1,325.09
Station Officer Level 1	\$1,360.16	\$59.51	\$1,419.67
Station Officer Level 2	\$1,416.92	\$61.99	\$1,478.91
Inspector	\$1,700.27	\$74.39	\$1,774.66
Superintendent	\$115,183 per annum		
Chief Superintendent	\$124,450 per annum		



5. Permanent firefighting FAQs

The recruitment information on this website is continually being updated. While every effort is made to ensure the information is correct, it may be subject to change.

What will assist me in my application as a permanent firefighter?

The recruitment process for a permanent firefighter is based on merit selection. All applicants are required to satisfy all stages of the recruitment process regardless of their qualifications.

Due to a high number of applications for a small number of positions, the process is highly competitive through each stage. However, there are a number of steps you can take which would help your preparation for the various recruitment stages.

- Read all the brochures on the NSWFB Recruitment Internet site.
- Start training for the Physical Aptitude Test, preferably as early as possible
- Visit fire stations and talk to serving firefighters. Not only will this give you an idea of the kind of duties firefighters undertake, but it will also allow you to see what an average day on the job is like.
- Use the NSWFB website to gain a good understanding of the work that permanent firefighters undertake, and the roles and responsibilities of the NSWFB.

Do I need qualifications to apply for the position of permanent firefighter?

You do not need formal qualifications to submit an online application; however you must meet the following criteria:

- Be an Australian Citizen or Permanent resident
- Possess a current and valid Driver's Licence (not a Learner's Permit)
- Be prepared to work anywhere in Sydney (most positions are in Sydney, however there are very limited opportunities for country postings)
- Have a good driving record (for more information, consult the Assessment of Firefighter Applicants brochure)

- Prior to commencing recruit training, successful applicants must hold a Medium Rigid Driver's Log Book (it is not essential to have this at the time of application).

The NSW Fire Brigades is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Women are encouraged to apply, as are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and applicants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

How do I apply?

Please refer to the Recruitment brochure available from our website.

What happens if I get accepted?

For successful applicants, the recruit training course runs for 16 weeks, and takes place at the NSW Fire Brigades Training College at Alexandria in inner Sydney. This is a non-residential course, and recruits need to be available for duty in Sydney Monday to Friday throughout the 16 weeks training.

Graduating recruit firefighters are posted almost exclusively to stations in the Sydney metropolitan area. The NSW Fire Brigades is an urban fire service, and as such most positions are in urban areas, and postings are based on operational needs.

What are the NSWFB policies that I should be aware of?

The following are the policies that you should read.

- NSWFB's Statement on Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity
- Harassment Prevention Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement (EAPS)

More information and a full list of policies are available on our Policies and Legislation section of our website.

6. Firefighting Career Checklist

Do the following checklist to decide if firefighting is the right career for you

- Are you committed to promoting the safety of the community?
- Can you get on with people from different backgrounds and cultures?
- Are you able to take orders from others and comply with appearance and behaviour standards?
- Do you have the emotional strength to deal with situations where you witness severe injuries or loss of life?
- Can you work under pressure?
- Can you work as part of a close-knit team?
- Do you have enough sensitivity to deal effectively with members of the public when they are distressed, confused or being obstructive?
- Can you take the responsibility for representing the NSW Fire Brigades appropriately whenever you are in uniform?
- Are you committed to developing and maintaining your skills?
- Do you suffer from claustrophobia, aquaphobia or vertigo?
- Are you committed to maintaining your health and physical fitness?
- Are you prepared to work day and night shifts, weekends, public holidays, Christmas, Easter and New Year?
- Are you a practical person who can work with their hands and with equipment?
- Are you someone who can be relied to be somewhere on time? Are you someone that others see as dependable?
- Are you prepared to work outside in all types of weather?
- Are you prepared to perform mundane tasks involved in the maintenance of a fire station?

For further information please visit our website at

www.fire.nsw.gov.au

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