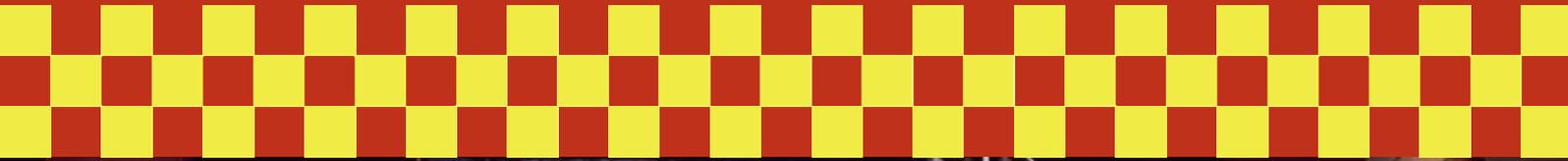




Fire &
Rescue NSW

Preparing for Interview Guide

Recruitment & Staffing



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Purpose

This guide has been developed to help candidates effectively prepare for Fire & Rescue NSW's permanent firefighter interview. Thorough preparation will enable you to perform to the best of your abilities at interview, giving you the best possible chance in securing a permanent firefighter role.

Do not assume that if you reach this stage the interview is simply a formality; more candidates will be brought to interview than there are positions available. The interview is probably the most critical part of the selection process and is subject to rigorous assessment.

Do your homework

Understand the role

Being as prepared as you can be for what lies ahead is part and parcel of being a firefighter. Research everything you can about the role to help you to build an in-depth understanding of what being a firefighter entails. Information is provided below on the role and what FRNSW look for, but consider other ways to collect information including:

- Visit a fire station and talk to a firefighter – Open Day on 21 May 2016 is a great time to do this
- Read the information available on the FRNSW website – think about the organisation, specialist areas, community safety campaigns and major incidents
- Follow FRNSW on Twitter (@FRNSW) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/frnsw) to stay in touch with what's going on.

More than fighting fires

Being a firefighter is no ordinary job. The work is varied, challenging and rewarding. In addition to fighting fires, a firefighter role entails a range of different functions, including:

- Fire prevention and investigation
- Community education and activities related to safety and prevention, including fire education for children (conducted in pre-schools, kindergartens, primary schools) and rescue education for teenagers (conducted in high schools); working with diverse communities to raise awareness, educate and help minimise the environmental impact of fire; and, providing assistance to the elderly, e.g. installation of smoke alarms in homes
- Recovery and management of hazardous, toxic and flammable materials
- Recovery after storm and flood
- Responding to rescue calls throughout the State, assisting people involved in domestic, industrial and transport incidents, including road accidents
- Providing basic first aid until an accredited provider arrives, such as the NSW Ambulance
- Carrying out building inspections to prepare risk assessments and pre-incident plans
- Maintaining good health and physical fitness
- Undertaking ongoing development and maintenance of skills and knowledge through regular training and study
- Cleaning/maintenance of equipment and the fire station. This includes core housekeeping duties such as cleaning the bathroom, kitchen, vacuuming etc.

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.

Generally, permanent firefighters work in a fire station as part of a platoon supervised by a Station Officer. Platoons contain anywhere between 3 and 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 9 and 27 fire stations and



headed by a Zone Commander. These Zones are then grouped in areas (north, south, east and west) headed by an Area Commander.

What skills and abilities are we looking for?

To be a successful firefighter, you will need a wide range of skills, knowledge and abilities. FRNSW seeks to employ people who reflect its professionalism and values, and the diversity, culture and skills of our society. Applications are accepted from all members of society and are assessed on merit.

The skills, knowledge and abilities we are looking for in our recruit firefighters include:

- Personal resilience and an ability to tolerate stressful situations
- Appreciation of the need to remain aware of risks and maintain a focus on safe work practices in situations that at times can be inherently dangerous
- Effective written and verbal communication skills, a commitment to service and helping others, and an interest and ability to engage with the public
- Demonstrated understanding of, and willingness to undertake, the full range of firefighter duties including a capacity to follow directions, ability to work shift work including weekends, flexibility in work locations and an interest in ongoing development
- Capacity to consistently demonstrate respect toward colleagues, the community and all others regardless of background, gender, age or differences
- Well-developed interpersonal skills and the capacity to work within, and contribute effectively to, a small team working in close proximity
- Ability to exercise self-discipline and use sound judgement in ensuring assigned tasks are completed to required standard and within tight timeframes
- Capacity to acquire new skills and demonstrated problem solving ability.

Our values guide what we do

Every aspect of the work we do at FRNSW is guided by our shared values. We are committed to:

Respect

We always treat each other, our partners, stakeholders and recipients of our services with respect and fairness while recognising and accepting the differences, wishes, rights, feelings and value of others.

Integrity

We always act professionally and can be trusted implicitly because honesty, transparency and strong ethical principles underpin who we are and everything we do.

Service

We are reliable, always performing our roles safely, effectively and efficiently, while taking responsibility for our actions and decisions.

Courage

We always put the needs of the community and FRNSW first, and have the courage not only to deal with serious emergency situations, but to stand up for others and to challenge wrongdoing.

These values align with and support the NSW Government sector core values of:

Integrity – Trust – Service – Accountability

Understand the process

Applicants will be required to demonstrate through a structured behavioural interview that they have the skills, knowledge, values and experience to succeed and join our permanent firefighter ranks.

The interview process involves candidates facing four separate two-person panels and answering behavioural based questions. This process is different to a 'normal' interview in that you will move from



panel to panel, with each panel asking you a different question. As the panels will all be in the same room, there will be some background noise from candidates at different stations. This is something you will need to be prepared for.

FRNSW strongly believes that the divergent opinions of the panel enable better recruitment decision making, reducing individual unconscious bias in the recruitment process to determine the best candidates for the job.

Each panel member scores the candidate response on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the highest score, enabling an overall score to be determined. Your score will be dependent on the quality, relevance and completeness of the examples you give in response to the question being asked. More details are provided in the “Practice technique” section of this guide.

Candidates are then ranked based on their interview score. The online verification test results are also considered to determine the candidates who progress to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Understand you

This is an area where candidates often under prepare. You need to think about you, ask yourself:

- Why do you really want the job?
- What can you bring to FRNSW that makes you the best candidate?
- What makes you stand out from the crowd?
- What skills and experience do you bring? How will this make you the best firefighter?
- What other qualities and personality traits do you possess?
- What things are you passionate about at work and outside of work?

Without having a good insight to yourself, it is very difficult to convey who you are to a panel of strangers at interview. The panel members are trying to find out about you, so take the time to think about you first!

Practice technique

The interview questions are behavioural based questions designed to specifically assess your ability to meet the requirements of a firefighter. The questions are written in a way that allows you to explain to the panel how you acted in specific situations (work related and non-work related) to show you have the skills and attributes required for the role. Rather than just telling us about your skills and ability we are interested to see demonstrated examples of this from your experience.

An example of a behavioural question might be:

Tell me about a time when you needed to persuade someone to do something that they did not want to do? How did you go about this?

Framing your answers to questions

The following simple formula can be used to ensure that you accurately frame your answer and describe your experiences, highlighting the results they provided. The STAR + LA method includes:

- S** The Situation – describe it
- T** The Task or Problem – what dilemma or problem did you face?
- A** The Action – what action did you take?
- R** The Result – what was the result of your action?
- L** Learning – What did you learn from this experience?
- A** Application – How does this fit the role you are applying for?



Before you start giving your answer it is critical to make sure you have **listened** to the question and that you understand it. The STARLA method will help you to construct a comprehensive response, but if you haven't listened to the question or have misunderstood it your answer will score poorly.



Develop soundbites

Soundbites are phrases or sentences that you should say throughout the interview. These are phrases that highlight your skills and attributes and by practicing them you will get into the habit of starting your answer in a strong and confident way.

For example, *“As a team leader I am required to have excellent communication skills to effectively allocate and manage tasks within my team. An example of this is when....”*

You should work on a soundbite for each story you want to tell.

Now try to come up with your own questions. Think about the role and what the panel might ask you, then start working on your response. The more you practice, the more you will get used to the STARLA method and using it as an effective frame for your answer.

You may also want to consider doing a mock interview with family or friends and recording it. Watching it back may be uncomfortable at first but you may see some bad habits you need to work on e.g. not making eye contact with the panel or fidgeting.

On the day

Before the interview

Consider the following:

First impressions

- Dress professionally, it will help you get in the right zone
- Check your hair/grooming, go easy on accessories, jewellery and perfume/cologne
- Have access to water/breath mints – lose the chewing gum

Logistics

- Have your clothes, resume, pens, papers, watch and directions to the interview location ready ahead of time – the last thing you need is extra stress
- Arrive early - punctuality is a subtle clue about attitude and behaviour. Tardiness, no matter the excuse, does not reflect well

Come prepared

- Know yourself – your strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments
- Know your resume - your work history and experiences need to be blended into your response to the interview questions so refresh on the detail
- Know your soundbites and story
- Leave your phone outside or at home. Even on silent the phone vibrating in your pocket will distract you



During the interview

Consider the following:

Timing

- Be aware of the time you have for each question and fill it well, don't waste it
- If you have time free ask the panel to repeat the question to make sure you are happy that you've answered it

Greetings

- First impressions count so be enthusiastic and greet the panel positively
- Try to remember the panel member names. If you miss one, ask again
- A positive close to the interview is just as important

Non-verbal communication

- Make eye contact – direct your contact between the panel members, be sure to focus on the person asking you the question
- Walk confidently, sit upright, don't fidget or fiddle with your hands
- Try to convey positive body language where possible

Be yourself

- The panel wants to see who you really are
- Be confident but don't be arrogant or too familiar
- Use professional language at all times
- Sell yourself but never be anything other than honest

After the interview

Don't be concerned if the panel members did not maintain eye contact with you because they have to write down as much detail as possible about you at interview.

It is also natural to remember lots of things you wanted to say immediately after the interview has finished – you are not alone. If you have prepared well then you can relax knowing that you have given it your very best shot.

The recruitment process is highly competitive, which means many candidates won't progress, not because they wouldn't make very good firefighters but because the quality of candidates who apply is exceptionally high. On behalf of FRNSW and the recruitment team, good luck!

Contacts and enquiries

For all enquiries regarding FRNSW requirements, selection criteria and the recruitment process email recruitment@fire.nsw.gov.au.

More information (including a comprehensive list of FAQs and candidate guide) is available under the recruitment section on the FRNSW website (www.fire.nsw.gov.au).

