

Role of a Firefighter

Introduction

The purpose of the NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) 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.

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 state wide, comprised of over 7,000 retained and permanent firefighters and support staff, plus around 6,000 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.

More than just a Firefighter

A permanent firefighter is a full-time firefighter. Being a firefighter is no ordinary job, as the work is varied and challenging. A Firefighter is not just about the suppression and prevention of fires, but they are also involved in:

- fire prevention and investigation
- community education and activities related to safety and prevention, including:
 - School discussion (Fire Ed - Pre-school/ Kindergarten and Rescue Ed - High School/ Teens)
 - Assistance with the elderly
 - Working with communities to help minimise the environmental impact of fire

- recovery and management of hazardous, toxic and flammable materials
- recovery after storm and flood
- motor vehicle accidents
- rescues and may administer basic first aid until an accredited provider arrives, such as the NSW Ambulance
- carry 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 studies
- cleaning/maintenance of equipment and the fire station.

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 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.



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Training

An essential component of a firefighter's job is to maintain skills and undertake ongoing training. It is through quality training that firefighters develop the confidence, skills, knowledge and abilities to combat and manage increasingly complex emergency situations.

People considering firefighting as a career must note that ALL firefighters undertake continuous training and studies. For example, 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 currently takes a minimum of three (3) years.



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.

Career Opportunities

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

Community Engagement and Development

The Community Engagement and Development Unit (CEDU) supports frontline personnel to understand the risks in their communities so that they can tailor prevention treatments to suit their local communities. CEDU is one of four units in the Community Safety Division focusing on prevention, and increasing the community's preparedness and resilience to hazards, emergencies and disaster.

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

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

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Career Opportunities *(cont)*

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 180 accredited rescue units and over 2,200 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 swift water, alpine, vertical and confined spaces rescues. The NSWFB is the lead agency for urban search and 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, nearly 1,400 training programs and other services to approximately 20,000 people each year.

Minimum requirements

To qualify as a Recruit Firefighter, you must possess and be able to demonstrate the following skills, attributes and requirements.

Citizenship

You must be an Australian Citizen or have been granted permanent residency in Australia.

Education

You must have the minimum education of a Higher School Certificate equivalent or higher qualification.

Licence and Certification

You must:

1. Hold a current and valid Australian Motor Vehicle Drivers Licence with a minimum Provisional (Green - P2) Licence and have a good driving record. Detailed information contained in the recruitment guidelines are available on our website at: www.fire.nsw.gov.au/recruitment
2. Hold the minimum of a Medium Rigid Driver's Licence at the commencement of recruit training (for successful applicants only; not required at time of application).
3. Hold a Senior First Aid (including CPR with competency HLTF301B) at the commencement of recruit training (for successful applicants only; not required at time of application).

Criminal History Record Check

You are required to authorise a National Criminal Record Check in the event that you are progressed beyond the interview stage. You would also be asked to declare any criminal record at this stage. Detailed information contained in the recruitment guidelines are available on our website at: www.fire.nsw.gov.au/recruitment

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Minimum requirements *(cont)*

Location

You must be prepared to work anywhere in Sydney (most positions are in Sydney, however there are very limited opportunities for country postings)

Fitness

You must be deemed fit for duties as a firefighter by the Brigade's Medical Officer and on the basis of the completion of a physical fitness assessment test (PAT).

Other assessments are conducted as part of the recruitment process, this information is available in the Recruitment Process document.

The NSWFB 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.

General conditions of employment and pay rates

Appointment

Successful applicants will be appointed as a Recruit Firefighter. Recruit Firefighters are on probation until they have progressed to Firefighter Level 1, or for a period of six months, whichever is the lesser.



On successful completion of this course, Recruit Firefighters are progressed to Firefighter Level 1 and are generally placed within the Sydney Metro region. **A Firefighter must serve wherever directed by the Commissioner.** (*Fire Brigade Regulation 2008*)

Shift system

The NSWFB is a 24-hour emergency service. Firefighters work rostered shifts, which includes 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. The majority of Firefighters fall into this category.
- 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 in case of an emergency.

Leave

Firefighters have entitlements to sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, annual leave, consolidated leave and long service leave, as per the Crown Employees (*NSW Fire Brigades Permanent Firefighting Staff Award 2008*).

For example:

- 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.
- Annual leave: Firefighters are rostered into a leave group at the time appointment is confirmed and is taken when the group's leave period falls due. The typical cycle for annual leave is thirty two (32) weeks worked = four (4) weeks leave then twenty four (24) weeks worked = four (4) weeks leave. Note: As a recruit firefighter you must complete a certain amount of service before you can take annual leave and which is in accordance with your leave group.

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Rates of pay *(effective from 18 June 2010)*

| Classification | Rate of Pay (\$) | Roster Allowance (\$) | Total Weekly Pay (\$) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Recruit Firefighter | \$993.05 | \$00.00 | \$993.05 |
| Firefighter Level 1 | \$1,103.40 | \$48.24 | \$1,151.67 |
| Firefighter Level 2 | \$1,164.71 | \$50.96 | \$1,215.67 |
| Qualified Firefighter | \$1,226.00 | \$53.64 | \$1,279.64 |
| Senior Firefighter | \$1,275.06 | \$55.78 | \$1,330.84 |
| Leading Firefighter | \$1,373.14 | \$60.07 | \$1,433.21 |
| Station Officer Level 1 | \$1,471.15 | \$64.36 | \$1,535.51 |
| Station Officer Level 2 | \$1,532.54 | \$67.05 | \$1,599.59 |
| Inspector | \$1,839.01 | \$80.46 | \$1,919.47 |
| Superintendent | \$124,582 per annum | | |
| Chief Superintendent | \$134,605 per annum | | |



Role of a Firefighter

Are you ready to become a firefighter?

The NSW Fire Brigade receives thousands of applications for a very small number of Recruit Firefighter positions.

The following list of questions have been compiled for your consideration in relation to some aspects of the role which some find challenging. Answer these questions honestly to determine whether being a Firefighter is the right career for you.

- Are you committed to promoting the safety of the community?
- Can you relate well 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 death?
- Do you have the sensitivity to deal effectively with members of the public when they are distressed, confused and being obstructive?
- Can you take the responsibility of representing the NSW Fire Brigades appropriately?
- Are you able to work shift work hours (including weekends and public holidays) which are based on a rotating roster that remains the same dependent on the platoon you are allocated?
- Are you prepared to work outside in all types of weather?
- Are you comfortable working in a small team of four? Can you work under pressure without letting the rest of your team down?
- Are you a practical person who can work with their hands and equipment?
- Are you someone who can be relied to be somewhere on time? Are you someone that others see as dependable?
- Are you committed to maintaining and developing your skills and knowledge through ongoing study for a period of at least 3 years with options for further study and advancement?
- Are you prepared to perform mundane tasks such as the maintenance of the station and equipment, including cleaning the facilities? Understanding that firefighters “live in” station during their shifts (preparing meals, showering etc.).
- Are you committed to maintaining your health and a good level of fitness to ensure your and your team’s safety?
- Are you prepared to be stationed in the greater metropolitan Sydney area? For stations outside that area, firefighters are eligible to go on a transfer waiting list and that opportunities to transfer to regional areas are limited and may mean years of waiting?

If you answered ‘Yes’ to all of the questions then you have the passion and the drive to become a NSW Fire Brigades Firefighter. Please make sure you read all the information on this website and follow the instructions on how to apply.

Please note, all advice in this document is subject to organisational need and the NSWFB reserves the right, without notice to applicants, to make changes to its processes and requirements should this be deemed necessary.