## Chapter Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Culture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Protection Agencies And Other Emergency Response Organizations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Fire Departments</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County, Parish, or Borough</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Districts and Fire Protection Districts</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Fire Departments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fire Departments</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Departments</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination Departments</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid On-Call Departments</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety Departments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private and Other Government Departments</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Fire Departments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Fire Departments</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Fire Protection Services</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport Fire Departments</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firefighters as Public Figures</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fire Fighter Image</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Behaviors of Firefighters</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Relations and Customer Service</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform and Dress</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and Education</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Training</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Training</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/County and State/Provincial Training Programs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Fire Academy</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional Training and Education</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighter Certification/Credentialing</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Firefighter Selection Process</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Examination</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Ability Test</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Process</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probationary Period</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Firefighter Selection</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fire Service Career Information</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Duty</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Summary</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review Questions</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 Notes</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Terms

Career Fire Department .................................. 18
Career Firefighter ........................................ 18
Combination Fire Department ....................... 19
Industrial Fire Brigades ............................... 20
Paid On-Call Firefighter ............................... 19
Public Safety Department ........................... 19
Volunteer Fire Department ......................... 18
Volunteer Firefighter ................................... 19

FESHE Outcomes

This chapter provides information that addresses the outcomes for the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) Principles of Emergency Services course.

1. Illustrate and explain the history and culture of the fire service.

3. Differentiate between fire service training and education and explain the value of higher education to the professionalization of the fire service.

4. List and describe the major organizations that provide emergency response service and illustrate how they interrelate.

5. Identify fire protection and emergency service careers in both the public and private sector.

7. Discuss and describe the scope, purpose, and organizational structure of fire and emergency services.

11. Recognize the components of career preparation and goal setting.

12. Describe the importance of wellness and fitness as it relates to emergency services.
Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to:

1. Describe the fire and emergency services culture. (Outcome 1)
2. Recognize why incidents may require response from fire protection agencies and other emergency response organizations. (Outcome 4)
3. Explain the different ways that fire departments may be categorized. (Outcome 7)
4. Recognize standards that firefighters as public figures are expected to maintain. (Outcomes 1, 12)
5. Differentiate between types of fire service training. (Outcomes 3, 11)
6. Explain the value of education in the fire service. (Outcomes 3, 11)
7. Identify education and training opportunities for the fire service. (Outcomes 3, 11)
8. Explain the importance of firefighter certification/credentialing. (Outcomes 3, 11)
9. Describe the firefighter selection process. (Outcomes 5, 11)
10. Recognize general fire service career information. (Outcomes 5, 7, 11)
A high school senior asked a local firefighter about the fire service as a profession. The student was interested in the type of work a firefighter does, what it takes to become a firefighter, and what things he could do to improve his chances to get hired.

The firefighter provided the student with information about the professional fire service. They discussed the physical and mental aspects of being a firefighter. They reviewed educational opportunities at the local community college. They also talked about volunteering as a firefighter with the local volunteer fire department as a way of learning about and understanding the profession.

After the student’s meeting with the local firefighter, the student was very enthusiastic about the fire service. The student was interested in learning more and was looking forward to meeting the fire chief of the local volunteer fire department.

Fire fighting is an occupation that, while dangerous, is a rewarding endeavor with a rich heritage of honor, sacrifice, and service. Members of the public hold firefighters in high regard, and they must always strive to meet the expectation of trust placed upon them (Figure 1.1, p.12).

People looking to join the fire and emergency services as a career will be joining an ever-evolving industry. The fire service profession includes a variety of emergency response agencies and types of fire departments. People can join the profession whether they live in a metropolitan or a rural area. Firefighters, as representatives of their departments, will take part in numerous training and educational opportunities. This chapter will further discuss the following topics:

- Fire and Emergency Services Culture
- Purposes of Fire Protection Agencies
- Other Emergency Response Organizations
- Types of Fire Departments
- Firefighters as Public Figures
- Training and Education
- Firefighter Selection Process
Fire and Emergency Services Culture

The public expects members of the fire service to react to a chaotic situation with a calm sense of purpose, critical analysis, and decisive action. As a result of generations of heroic actions under adverse conditions, the fire service has built a reputation as one of the most highly regarded public service organizations. Fire fighting consistently tops lists of the most trusted and respected occupations.

The public, as well as other emergency response agencies, call the fire department to respond to almost every conceivable type of incident. In addition, fire departments are called for other emergencies that require the resources, expertise, and dedication to duty that the fire department will provide, such as:

- Medical responses
- Vehicle and industrial accidents
- Collapses
- Hazardous material incidents
- Water rescues
- Natural or human-caused disasters (Figure 1.2a, b, and c)
Fire Protection Agencies and Other Emergency Response Organizations

Fire protection agencies, no matter what their affiliation, are tasked with protecting people and property from fire. The majority of these agencies are responsible for fire prevention and public education concerning fire dangers.

Fire service organizations often respond to incidents along with other public and private entities. Each organization has a specific skill set and area of responsibility to ensure the protection of lives and/or property. Common local response agencies may include police, emergency medical services (EMS), and public works and utility departments. During larger scale incidents, county, state, or federal response agencies may be called upon for assistance. Chapter 10 provides additional information concerning other emergency response organizations (Figure 1.3).

Types of Fire Departments

Fire departments generally function under some form of government structure, although some departments are independent organizations. Some state governments may furnish fire protection, and in some cases, emergency medical
services for state turnpikes, forests and parks, or large state institutions. The federal government provides fire protection for national parks and forests and military installations. The National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service (USFA) provide fire prevention and suppression activities, often contracting for mutual aid with local fire departments (Figure 1.4).

The term fire department is loosely applied to almost any agency providing fire protection. However, a more precise definition refers to the fact that the organization is a departmental division within a larger body. This body may be a municipal government, county, parish, or borough commission. There are more than 33,000 public fire departments in the United States.

Jurisdiction
The primary means of categorizing public fire and emergency services organizations is by the jurisdiction the organization serves. In the context of this manual, the term jurisdiction has two different connotations. First, it refers to the area that a fire or emergency services organization serves. Second, it refers to the authority that gives the organization the legal right to exist, provide fire protection, and ensure that protection is adequate.

Municipal
Municipalities are the most common jurisdiction for fire departments. Whether career, volunteer, or combination, this type of organization operates under the authority of the local government, and receives funding and oversight from that body.

Municipal fire department refers to a functional division of the local government, that the state or province authorizes to provide fire protection for functional divisions of the local government, and can include the following:

- City
- Town
- Township
- Village
- Other local governmental structure
As a department within the municipal government, most fire departments have an organizational structure that is similar to other jurisdictional agencies. The department head, generally called the chief or commissioner, serves as the primary interface between the fire department and the rest of the municipal government.

The citizens determine the level and type of services through their elected officials. When making this determination, certain factors must be considered, such as:

- Population
- Geographic size
- Predominant risk
- Any special fire protection requirements

A municipal fire department must maintain sufficient personnel, equipment, and fire stations to serve the jurisdiction properly. In smaller departments, all training and administrative functions may operate from a single building. Larger departments may feature separate facilities for separate functions such as:

- Training
- Administration
- Fire prevention
- Other support functions

Funding to support municipal fire departments is generally obtained through the collection of taxes levied on businesses and homeowners within the jurisdiction. However, some fire departments rely on fundraising efforts and grants, and may charge a separate subscription fee or at least a portion of the cost to provide an emergency response. This funding is most typical in emergency medical responses and non-emergency patient transfers. Most municipal fire department budgets are set on an annual basis and include all expenses, including the following:

- Personnel
- Equipment
- Maintenance
- Other operating expenses

**County, Parish, or Borough**

Fire departments operated by county, parish, or boroughs are becoming more common in the U.S. Often these departments begin with mutual aid agreements between communities in a county jurisdiction and progress to the sharing of resources. Communications, fire prevention, technical rescue and hazardous materials response capabilities may be shared to conserve and avoid duplication of resources.

The development of shared county facilities, such as airports, industrial complexes, or other infrastructure, may lead to consolidation of area fire departments. This arrangement may enable smaller towns and suburban or rural locations to benefit from a greater variety of resources without having
to individually bear the total cost. The county fire department may simply augment municipal fire departments, or it may consolidate each department into one larger organization. These departments may also serve the unincorporated areas of a county.

**Fire Districts and Fire Protection Districts**

A fire district may serve the same purpose as a county fire department in some states, but it is not directly tied to the county, parish, or borough. These districts may overlap other jurisdictional boundaries in their fire protection services. The district is a state-authorized governing body established to provide fire protection within a specified area. Generally, the district operates under a board of commissioners or trustees who represent the residents of the district.

The fire district may feature a career, combination, or volunteer organization, and may also provide the following services:

- EMS
- Hazardous materials response
- Technical rescue
- Other specialty operations (Figure 1.5)

![Figure 1.5](fire_districts.jpg)

*Figure 1.5* Fire districts may use specialized vehicles for each type of emergency. These can include EMS, haz-mat operations, rescue, and special operations. *Courtesy of Ron Jeffers.*
In most cases, the fire district oversees the duties generally associated with fire departments. However, depending on its organization, it may be responsible for other services, such as water supply or law enforcement.

Unlike other public fire departments, the fire district lacks other municipal departments to support its operation. It must provide or contract for services, such as apparatus and facility maintenance and repair.

The fire protection district, which is defined by state statute, varies slightly from the fire district concept. This form of organization shares some elements of a fire district. However, in some areas, it may not exist as a separate government agency. The fire protection district may be established when a group of people with a common need for fire protection, typically in a rural or seasonal community, petition an established fire department to extend protection to its property. For a fee, the local fire department provides this service under a contract. The fee collected will compensate the local fire department for any equipment or personnel required to provide the additional coverage.

A state or province may formally recognize and possibly provide some funding for the contract. In other cases, the only recognition is the contract itself, with the group of property owners serving as the legal entity.

**Public Fire Departments**

Jurisdictions receive fire protection in a variety of ways. The most prevalent systems include:

- Career Departments
- Volunteer Departments
- Combination Departments
- Paid On-Call Departments
- Public Safety Departments

Regardless of the jurisdiction or organization, a fire department must be properly staffed in order to function safely and effectively. This staffing may include career firefighters who earn a salary and are employed full-time in this capacity. Other firefighters are paid on-call or receive no monetary compensation. In this context, the term professional firefighter refers not to an amount of compensation, but a level of competence and expertise that may be applied equally to all firefighters.

**U. S. Fire Department Profiles**

Fire departments that are wholly or mostly volunteer comprise approximately 87 percent of all public fire departments. These departments protect approximately 35 percent of the entire U.S. population. Departments comprising career or mostly career members, totaling 13 percent of fire service organizations, protect approximately 66 percent of the U.S. population.
**Career Departments**

Most large cities in the U.S. and Canada maintain **career fire departments**. Many counties and fire protection districts also operate career fire departments. These jurisdictions maintain full-time firefighters who are on duty in firehouses around the clock, working one of a variety of shift schedules (see the work schedule section in this chapter for examples). These **career firefighters** are paid a salary and may receive additional monetary incentives for fire or EMS certifications, college degree, rank, or longevity. Most career departments also employ firefighters and civilian personnel who work conventional business hours to staff administrative positions and support functions. In addition, some career fire departments may employ part-time or seasonal personnel to work during peak times of the year when call volume or a specific danger, such as wildfires, may be present (Figure 1.6).

**Volunteer Departments**

Although **volunteer fire departments** protect some cities, they are typically found in smaller towns and rural communities. These departments may be organized in a variety of ways. Some departments operate as a department of local government, but others are totally independent organizations. In some jurisdictions, the government may provide a building and apparatus, while in other instances, the volunteer department owns the equipment, buildings, or both (Figure 1.7). Without governmental support, the organization may operate on the following:

---

**Career Firefighter** — Person whose primary employment is as a firefighter within a fire department.

**Career Fire Department** — Fire department composed of full-time, paid personnel.

**Volunteer Firefighter** — Active member of a fire department who many receive monetary compensation for on-call time and/or fire fighting duty time.

---

**Figure 1.6** The differences between career (or mostly career) fire departments and volunteer departments in terms of percentage of the population protected.
Donations
Subscription fees from residents
Billing for response costs
Fundraising efforts

Many volunteer departments combine several of the aforementioned sources to maintain services. Volunteer fire departments are overseen by the government entity of which they are a member, or officers of an independent association or board in the case of non-government organizations.

Some volunteer departments may have members on shift at the firehouse, while other personnel are alerted by pager, telephone, or community wide audible signal. Volunteer firefighters respond from home, leisure, or work in order to provide services. Depending on the jurisdiction, some members may respond to the firehouse to drive the apparatus, while other members report directly to the incident scene in their own vehicles.

Combination Departments

Combination fire departments exist in a wide variety of configurations. Some departments maintain a cadre of volunteers who supplement career firefighters with specific duties or major incidents. Other departments are primarily volunteer, with a handful of career firefighters working daytime hours when volunteers may be scarce. In some systems, control of the department is the responsibility of a volunteer chief and officers. Meanwhile, in other departments, career members direct operations and administration. Oversight and division of responsibilities as well as the percentages of volunteer and career members varies greatly among different jurisdictions.

Paid On-Call Departments

Functionally, most paid on-call departments operate in a manner similar to volunteer departments. These organizations may have minimally staffed fire stations or rely totally on the response of paid on-call members. Paid on-call firefighters are generally paid with an hourly wage or set fee per response. If they are not in the firehouse, they may be summoned using the same methods as volunteers. This system may also be found in small career or combination departments.
departments as a method to maintain part-time personnel for use at large-scale incidents. Generally, the funding for a paid on-call department is derived from a local government or association.

**Public Safety Departments**

In most public safety departments, the fire command/management officers, company officers, and apparatus driver/operators are career fire personnel. On a given shift, they may function as police officers or as firefighters according to need.

Some jurisdictions combine the roles of law enforcement officers and firefighters by creating a position often referred to as a public safety officer. The public safety officer may operate in either capacity based on staffing or incident requirements. Depending on the organization, all personnel or only a portion of the staff may operate in this role.

**Private and Other Government Departments**

Fire departments may be organized outside the public sector as part of a private company. Some of these private fire departments may be employed by a single company or industrial complex, while others may be organized as private corporations that engage in contracting with other private companies or governments for the purpose of fire protection. The federal government also provides fire protection and emergency services as part of the Department of Defense as well as other civilian agencies that protect numerous federal facilities. Examples of these types of fire departments include:

- Industrial Fire Departments
- Federal Fire Departments
- Commercial Fire Protection Services
- Airport Fire Departments

**Industrial Fire Departments**

Some large industrial complexes, especially those whose facilities are especially hazardous (such as refineries or power plants), may operate their own industrial fire departments, fire brigades, or emergency response teams. Depending on the facility’s size and requirements, these departments may be larger than the public fire department of the community in which the industry is located.

Members of industrial fire organizations must comply with the professional qualifications standards included in the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) standard: NFPA® 1081, *Standard for Industrial Fire Brigade Member Professional Qualifications.* Additionally, in the U.S., these brigades must comply with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations contained in CFR 1910.156, which regulates the organization, training, and personal protective equipment of fire brigades established by employers.

Similar to all other fire departments, industrial fire brigades have specific structure, training, and policies for all aspects of their operation. For additional information concerning industrial fire fighting, refer to IFSTA’s *Industrial Emergency Services Training: Incipient Level* and *Industrial Exterior and Structural Fire Brigades* manuals.
Federal Fire Departments
The federal government operates many fire and emergency services departments on military and federal installations throughout the world. These departments may provide structural fire protections as well as aircraft rescue and fire fighting (ARFF) services and marine fire fighting for vessels and maintenance facilities. In addition, these departments may also provide mutual aid to local civilian fire departments in surrounding areas.

Commercial Fire Protection Services
Some jurisdictions may contract with private companies for fire protection, EMS, and other emergency services. Privatization of services once considered to be government functions has gained popularity in recent years. While privatization is not the norm in the fire service, jurisdictions may consider commercial fire protection as an alternative.

Airport Fire Departments
Some public, non-military airports rely partially or entirely on the local fire department for fire protection. Other airports may be required to operate their own fire departments or contract with commercial fire departments to provide this service. Regardless of funding or organization, the department must be certified to provide ARFF services. If the fire departments are responsible for airport buildings, they must also be trained and equipped to provide structural fire fighting. (Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8 Airport firefighters are specially trained and certified to fight aircraft fires.
Firefighters as Public Figures
As public figures, all firefighters are expected to maintain certain standards. These standards include the following:

- The firefighter image
- Responsible behaviors of firefighters
- Conduct
- Teamwork
- Human relations and customer service
- Uniform and dress
- Physical fitness

The Firefighter Image
The image of the fire department, to include its firefighters, in the eyes of the public affects the ability of firefighters to operate effectively in the community they serve. Rather than a notion of firefighters sitting in the firehouse waiting for an alarm, most fire departments seek to establish and communicate a proactive posture to the public.

In many neighborhoods, the fire department is known as the one government service that responds immediately to virtually any problem and will attempt to solve any issue in the best interest of those parties involved. The very nature of those individuals who become firefighters lends itself toward providing the highest level of service to the community no matter what the need. Maintaining, enhancing, and doing nothing to tarnish this well-deserved reputation is the responsibility of every firefighter.

Responsible Behaviors of Firefighters
The fire service has standards of behavior and a code of ethics to which compliance is expected. The following principles are important for transitioning into a career in the fire service:

- Be sincere in your interest and dedication to the job — Successful firefighters selflessly support the group effort. Cooperation and teamwork are an integral part of safe fire fighting and emergency operations. Members must be willing to work to the best of their ability in the position to which they are assigned, during emergency incidents, and routine duties.

- Be loyal to the department and fellow firefighters — Firefighters should be prepared to implement and support the policies and operations of their department whenever possible. Loyalty to other department members is a necessity as firefighters constantly depend on each other for safety and support on and off the fireground.

- Aggressive pursuit of training and educational opportunities — Firefighter training is a continual process based on changing equipment, evolving tactics, and expanded missions. Members must display a willingness to learn throughout their careers and be open to new ideas and procedures in order to operate safely at incidents that may pose new challenges.

- Guard speech on and off duty — While firefighters should be well-versed and able to readily discuss fire service history and fire safety with the pub-
lic, there is confidential information that firefighters must not divulge in conversation. During the course of duty, firefighters may be privy to private health or personal information concerning citizens or firefighters. This information must be held in confidence and only relayed to appropriate authorities based on department policy and local and federal law.

- **Inspire confidence and respect** — Firefighters should strive to be honest, fair, and trustworthy in all dealings with fellow firefighters as well as members of the public. Showing other individuals proper respect and acting with personal integrity will help to enhance one’s own image as well as the image of the fire service in general.

- **Accept praise modestly and criticism graciously** — Legitimate constructive commentary should be accepted with the thought towards improving future performance. Accolades, honors, and advancement often follow improvement. This acknowledgement should be accepted with humility and in a respectful manner.

- **Ask questions** — Communication only takes place when information is understood by the receiver. Firefighters must receive and process both routine and critical information from a variety of sources on a regular basis. If any portion of this information is incomplete or unclear, the firefighter must ask specific questions until an understanding is gained.

**Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) includes safeguards for patient privacy, including medical information. As caregivers, fire service members should be aware of the need to keep all patient information confidential and never discuss patient information.

**Conduct**

Firefighters must conduct themselves in accordance with the high standards to which public safety professionals are held both on and off duty, exercising good judgment and adhering to department policy. Members should report for duty in good mental and physical condition, ready to perform their assigned duties. Firefighters should never be in the firehouse, on or off duty, while intoxicated or under the influence of any illegal drug. Unprofessional conduct, such as the following, may shed an unfavorable light on the fire service in the eyes of the public and should not be tolerated in or around the firehouse:

- Horseplay
- Unruly behavior
- Loud swearing
- Rudeness

**NOTE:** No activity that may compromise firefighter or public safety or gives an unfavorable impression of the fire department can be tolerated.
Firefighters are expected to adhere to the following general rules of conduct:

- Be fully prepared to report for duty as required without specific permission for absence based on local policy.
- Arrive on time for duty shifts, training, meetings, and other activities.
- Follow orders to the best of your ability per organizational policy.
- Be respectful and courteous to the public and all department members (Figure 1.9).
- Establish and maintain the best possible working relationship with fellow firefighters, other public employees, and the general public.

**Teamwork**

Fighting fires and meeting the challenges of other emergencies is a team effort. Individuals learn this basic concept during recruit training, where they are taught that the safety of each member is dependent on one another, and the operation will succeed only if all members are working in a coordinated effort toward a common goal.

Effective teams are built through training and working together. These teams must constantly train together in order to ensure safe and effective operations. A team develops and maintains enthusiasm and confidence as it works successfully at numerous incidents over a period of time. Each member must contribute effort in order to ensure the strength and success of the team. Basic factors for team success include the following:

- All members should work hard to earn the trust of other firefighters.
- All members must consistently demonstrate a high level of integrity.
- Each member must contribute to the team.
- Each firefighter should know his/her job as well as the jobs of other group members in order to function most efficiently.
- Each member must communicate well with the team (Figure 1.10).

**Human Relations and Customer Service**

Firefighters must function in a diverse world, both inside and outside the firehouse. Members of the modern fire service have a more diverse background...
than ever before. Many firefighters work in neighborhoods that reflect a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. In public and in the firehouse, firefighters may encounter diversity, such as:

- Gender
- Race
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic status
- Sexual preference

In order to maintain a cohesive workplace, firefighters must be prepared to work in a diverse environment. Respecting individual differences and cooperating with others is essential to providing effective services to the public.

**Uniform and Dress**

Department policy usually defines appropriate dress. Most organizations have several uniforms that are worn based on functionality, appearance, and safety requirements. A dress uniform (sometimes called class A) is often worn for special events, public appearances, inspections, parades, or certain social functions. This uniform generally consists of uniform pants, dress shirt (white or blue per policy), dress jacket, tie, black shoes, appropriate uniform insignia, and uniform hat (Figure 1.11).

Station work uniforms should comply with NFPA®1975, Standard on Station/Work Uniforms for Emergency Services. The style of the uniform may vary based on local preferences and the type of duty the wearer is expected to perform. Common styles include collared shirts, polo shirts, or tee shirts with uniform trousers. In some instances, coveralls may be worn while particularly dirty jobs are undertaken. Clothing that does not meet the fire resistance standards of the fire department should not be worn during fire response.

Volunteer firefighters generally do not wear a specific duty uniform when responding to an incident. Jurisdictions may recommend clothing made of natural fibers as opposed to synthetic material because natural material will not melt under heat conditions like synthetic fibers. In addition, this clothing often has a patch or logo to identify responders as members of the fire department (Figure 1.12).
Figure 1.13a. Reflective trim catches light and reflects it to enhance the visibility of responders at night or in low-light conditions.

Figure 1.13b Wristlets are built into the ends of coat sleeves to provide a protective interface between the sleeves and gloves.

Figure 1.13c Coat collars prevent embers, water, and other debris from getting under the coat.

Figure 1.13d A coat closure system may include more than one mechanism to ensure a complete seal.

Figure 1.13e A loop on the back of protective clothing serves as a handle to aid in the rescue of a distressed firefighter.

Figure 1.13f Due to their weight, protective trousers are supported in place with suspenders.

Figure 1.13g Protective gloves cover the hands and coat wristlet to provide protection against common hazards.

Figure 1.13h Fire fighting boots protect the foot and ankle from hazards routinely found at an incident scene.

Figure 1.13i Styles of fire fighting boots may vary, but their common purpose is to protect a firefighter’s feet and lower legs.
All firefighters must wear personal protective clothing while working at an incident. Full personal protective equipment (PPE) includes the following:

- Turnout coat and pants
- Boots
- Helmet
- Protective hood
- Eye protection
- Gloves
- Hearing protection (Figure 1.13 a-i)

When working in atmospheres that are or may become hazardous, firefighters must also wear self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) equipped with a personal alert safety system (PASS) device. Additional information concerning station uniforms, PPE, and SCBA may be found in Chapter 3.

**Physical Fitness**

In order to safely perform many physically demanding tasks efficiently during an incident, firefighters must have agility, skill, and coordination. Members must maintain proper physical conditioning in order to perform these tasks without endangering themselves or others.

In order to gain entrance to the fire service, most candidates must meet certain physical standards. This criterion is often based on NFPA® 1582, Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments. Applicants who are selected generally participate in a strenuous training academy where physical conditioning is combined with fire service training. In recent years, a greater emphasis has been placed on continued physical conditioning throughout a firefighter’s career. Because of the physically demanding nature of fighting fires, a lack of fitness endangers the individual and the entire team to which they are assigned (Figure 1.14).

**Physical Fitness**

Maintaining physical fitness is an important part of ensuring the safety and success of a fire department. Recent health and wellness initiatives have begun to aid firefighters in this goal by assisting with dietary and fitness programs for members of all ages.
Training and Education

Training and education is just as important to veteran firefighters as it is to a new recruit. The depth and complexity of training will vary based on experience. However, learning new skills and maintaining current in a changing profession requires constant attention to education and training. This section will discuss the following topics:

- Types of training
- Departmental training
- Regional/county and state/provincial training programs
- Value of education
- Colleges and universities
- National fire academy
- Non-traditional training and education
- Firefighter certification/credentialing

The Difference Between Training and Education

Training, also called drilling, is a supervised activity or process designed to achieve and maintain proficiency through instruction and hands-on practice in the operation of equipment and systems that are expected to be used in the performance of assigned duties. Education is the process of teaching new skills or additional knowledge in preparation for some kind of activity. Education is the process by which teachers bring about learning in their students. This process may involve formal classroom instruction or other processes.

Types of Training

Fire service training primarily consists of classroom study and training drills. Classroom work is the fundamental method used to acquire the knowledge that can be further developed by practical application during a training drill. Practical skill training drills enable firefighters to rehearse and master fireground evolutions in a controlled environment. Training and practice is necessary to ensure firefighters are able to perform safely and efficiently during actual incidents and build necessary teamwork and proficiency in their skills.

Departmental Training

Most of the training that firefighters receive throughout their careers comes from within the fire department. Beginning with recruit training in the career fire service, a trainee is placed in a departmental training academy. Upon successful completion of the academy, a new firefighter may then be assigned to a fire company to serve a probationary period as a firefighter. During this time, and for the rest of their careers, firefighters will take part in in-service training at the company level. This activity may be in the form of individual
company or multi-company drills, or it may involve returning to the training division for updates on new equipment or procedures.

Some departments have a staff of firefighters, fire officers, and/or civilian personnel dedicated to training. Often a chief or other fire officer is in command of this staff. Personnel assigned these responsibilities coordinate and instruct recruit training as well as other department training and drills. Smaller career or volunteer departments may have a single person assigned the role of training officer. This person may fulfill all the duties associated with training, and in some small departments may also maintain additional responsibilities of a chief or company level officer (Figure 1.15).

Volunteer fire departments must attempt to coordinate their training schedule at the convenience of their members. Drills are often held during evening hours or on weekends. Training academies established for new members of these organizations must usually meet during these hours as well. Members must not respond to an emergency until they have received proper training in the duties that they will be expected to perform.

**Occupational Health and Safety**

NFPA® 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, states that no member (career or volunteer) shall be allowed to engage in structural fire fighting until they have met the recommendations contained in NFPA® 1001, *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*.

**Regional/County and State/Provincial Training Programs**

 Virtually every level of government sponsors fire training programs. The primary agencies responsible for providing this instruction vary based on location and may range from occasional seminars or classes to full-time academies with fixed facilities, full-time staff, and a yearly course calendar.

 In jurisdictions that feature numerous small departments, the county, parish, or borough may administer programs that include a full slate of courses from recruit training to advanced level instruction. These courses may be
comparable to the programs held at state sponsored academies. A growing
trend toward regional training centers features several jurisdictions combin-
ing resources to operate a shared facility for mutual training programs that
benefit fire departments that closely border each other.

Some states or provinces provide fire training that operates under the ju-
risdiction of the state or provincial fire marshal’s office or other governmental
agency. Training programs are also offered at community colleges or vocational
training centers. These programs may have full- or part-time instructional
staff that develop and deliver courses at a fixed campus or at field locations.
Some organizations with large training centers offer dormitory accommoda-
tions that allow students to attend weekend classes or week-long programs
(Figure 1.16).

**Value of Education**
The value of obtaining education and continuing training in the fire service
is immeasurable in terms of its potential to impact the safety and effective-
ness of a firefighter as well as the members and civilians with whom he or she
interacts. Acquiring a quality education and maintaining a current skill set
is vital to a firefighter’s career development.

Beginning as a recruit, the firefighter must read, train, and practice skills
to become proficient and learn the techniques associated with equipment
and procedures. This training is an ongoing process as the field of fire fight-
ing and emergency response is vast and continually evolving with emerging
hazards and specialized equipment. Firefighters should not presume they have
learned, studied, or trained enough to meet the challenges of every scenario.
Colleges and Universities

Firefighters are finding the pursuit of higher education increasingly valuable for a career in the fire service. Many colleges and universities offer programs at the Associate’s, Bachelor’s, or Master’s degree level that will increase a student’s knowledge base relative to fire science, emergency management, or administration of a public organization, such as a fire department. An increasing number of departments require some level of a college degree or credits in order to obtain employment or gain promotion.

Community colleges throughout North America offer many traditional fire science degree programs in the classroom as well as an increasing number of online opportunities to advance a fire service education. Both platforms for learning usually receive the recognition of an Associate’s degree upon successful completion.

Likewise, colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada also provide offerings with Bachelor’s or graduate degree programs in fire service management, fire protection engineering, or similar fields of study. Schools such as Oklahoma State University, University of Maryland, and University of New Haven are well known for their commitment to the fire service (Figure 1.17).

College level programs are usually designed to supplement local department, county, and state fire academy offerings. Most college curriculum contains arts and science components as well as fire protection courses that are beyond the scope of basic fire training programs. These courses often emphasize supervisory and management skills and are designed to prepare students for entry into or promotion within a fire department. Some institutions may offer programs that emphasize fire protection engineering, building design, or code enforcement.

FESHE

The National Fire Service Programs Committee (NFSPC) developed the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Model (FESHE) curriculum to create a national standard for the fire service in higher education. Degree programs based on FESHE curriculum allow students to more easily transfer between schools and create a national continuity in fire service education.

National Fire Academy

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) operates the National Fire Academy (NFA) as a part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This facility offers a wide variety of courses in the areas of incident management, fire technology, and fire prevention. With the goal of improving professional development in the fire service, the academy delivers courses through on-campus programs as well as an extensive outreach effort.

The on-campus resident programs are conducted at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmetsburg, Maryland. Students are primarily fire service members from around the nation who attend courses at minimal expense due to a stipend program that pays the cost of tuition, travel, and accommodations in campus dormitories. Most on-campus courses are one-
or two weeks in duration and are linked for student advancement through increasing levels of complexity in a particular subject or general knowledge in a variety of subject areas.

The NFA outreach program provides for short duration (generally two day) classes in locations throughout the U.S. State training agencies usually coordinate these programs, which are often scheduled for weekends to allow maximum participation from both the career and volunteer sector.

Non-Traditional Training and Education
Distance learning through online courses is a method of training and education that is growing in popularity. Many colleges and universities offer a wide variety of degree programs that are partially or entirely based on online courses. Based on the institution’s accreditation, these programs may range from continuing education credits to degree-awarding programs. Degrees earned online from accredited schools carry the same validity as those degrees that students earn in classroom programs.

These programs offer the advantages of allowing students to work at a time of day convenient to their schedules. They also reduce or eliminate travel to a physical classroom and enable a student to receive an education from an institution in a distant location without leaving their homes. This type of education is particularly appealing to students already employed as firefighters who may need to balance a shift schedule and family responsibilities with class requirements (Figure 1.18).

The NFA also offers a program of online courses. Most of these offerings feature continuing education units or college credit. In addition, the Degrees at a Distance Program (DDP) is an effort coordinated by the NFA with a number of colleges and universities across the country that offer either a program of online or correspondence study that, upon completion, may lead to a Bachelor’s degree as well as recognition from the NFA.

**Figure 1.18** Some institutions offer online training, which is well suited to students already employed as firefighters.
A wide variety of classes, conferences, and seminars are sponsored by all levels of government as well as numerous fire service organizations and private concerns. These programs may vary in the following ways:

- Topics
- Venues
- Cost
- Quality

An interested student may want to speak to someone who has previously attended the event and conduct his/her own research to determine if the offering is a good value. Some important questions may include:

- Did the advertised instructors actually teach/speak?
- What was the quality/availability of instructional materials?
- Did the program content live up the advertising?
- Were continuing education units (CEU) or a certificate of completion provided?

**Firefighter Certification/Credentialing**

When discussing credentials for fire fighting skills, the term certification attests that an individual has met the criteria specified in a particular standard. The certification of firefighters is important for a variety of reasons, including the aspect of liability. A firefighter who is certified in a particular set of skills should be ready and able to perform those skills safely and effectively during an incident.

The fire service typically uses consensus standards that committees of fire service and industry professionals develop and the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) adopts. These documents are commonly called Professional Qualifications Standards (Pro-Qual), which set minimum competency standards for a wide variety of fire fighting and related activities.

Because they establish minimum requirements, some jurisdictions may choose to adapt and increase the criteria to safely and effectively meet local protection requirements. In these instances, the training of local agencies may be more comprehensive or rigorous than the guidelines set forth in the NFPA® standard.

In order to become nationally certified in any Pro-Qual standard, a firefighter must pass a certification examination subsequent to completing the specified training program. The agency that provided the training must be accredited by one of the two entities that accredit training organizations. The National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (NBFSPQ or Pro-Board) and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) provide national recognition of a firefighter's certification.

**National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (NBFSPQ or Pro-Board)**

The National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro-Board) was an outgrowth of the Joint Council of Fire Service Organizations that was conceived in 1972 to provide minimum performance standards with which firefighter’s skills could be evaluated. In addition, the Pro-Board was tasked
with accrediting the certifying agencies. In the mid-1980s, the responsibility for creating and maintaining professional qualifications standards was given to the NFPA®. The Pro-Board began to concentrate solely on the accreditation of fire service programs. Many agencies throughout the U.S. and Canada, as well as overseas hold Pro-Board Accreditation for their programs.

**International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC)**

The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC), based at Oklahoma State University (OSU), was created as a result of action by the National Association of State Directors of Fire Training (currently the North American Fire Training Directors). Organized in 1991, the purpose of IFSAC is to provide a self-governed and peer-driven system that accredits fire service certification programs as well as fire-related degree programs. IFSAC is organized into four sections: Administration, Certificate Assembly, Degree Assembly, and the Congress. The Administration is provided by staff at OSU, and the Congress is composed of assemblies drawn from agencies representing certification and degree programs.

**Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE)**

The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) provides training and career resource information to agencies and individuals who are striving to meet international performance standards. Fire departments can implement a strategic self-assessment model to aid in achieving improved service and accreditation through the Commission on Fire Service Accreditation International (CFAI).

The Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) provides guidance to individuals for career development and recognizes through credentialing fire service professionals who have achieved excellence.

**Firefighter Selection Process**

Potential firefighters must possess a variety of skills and attributes as well as good physical conditioning in order to be successful candidates for selection to a fire department. Excellent interpersonal skills vital for interaction with members of the public and other firefighters are sought, along with technical aptitude and the ability to work safely in a physically demanding profession. Firefighters must also be trustworthy and adhere to a code of ethics expected by the public as well as other members. The ability to present a positive image of the fire service on and off duty is an important consideration during the firefighter selection process.

The specific details of selecting firefighter candidates vary by region and jurisdiction. Typically, an advertisement for the position of firefighter will begin the application period of the hiring process. A written examination, physical agility test, and oral interview are often the primary steps to thin the field of applicants to those candidates most likely to succeed as firefighters. The remaining group of applicants may be subjected to a physical and psychological examination as well as background screening and drug testing. A list of potential trainees may be developed based on these criteria, and the desired number of applicants selected to proceed to the training academy.
Recruitment
Many career and volunteer fire departments use various forms of advertising to elicit a sufficient number of applicants for firefighter positions. Jurisdictions have used traditional media outlets, such as television, radio, and newspapers, to advertise for applicants. Some departments place advertisements in trade publications to reach those individuals who may be members of departments in different geographical areas. An increasing number of departments use their official website or other popular fire service websites to convey their recruiting message.

Fire Cadet/Explorer Program
Many career and volunteer fire departments sponsor cadet or Explorer Scout programs for the youth in their jurisdiction. These programs educate young people (generally ages 14-21) about careers in the fire service and may act as a catalyst for the recruitment efforts of the sponsoring agency. Firefighters often serve as mentors in these programs and conduct introductory training courses on fire service topics. In some programs, older cadets or Explorers may assist with routine maintenance duties in the firehouse.

Preparation
Heavily populated jurisdictions often have a large pool of applicants for relatively few firefighter positions. Applicants should consider a regimented plan of preparation in order to maximize their potential for acceptance into a training academy. Potential candidates often participate in a physical conditioning program in order to excel during the physical agility testing that is often required. Some candidates work toward a college degree or certification as a firefighter or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) as these are sometimes prerequisites for applying for a position. Participating in practice interviews or pre-tests are also worthwhile methods of preparation.

Application
The initial step for potential candidates usually involves filing an application with the organization with which they seek employment. Prerequisites vary widely by jurisdiction but usually require an applicant be at least 18 years of age, hold a valid driver's license, and have a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

Some departments may have more stringent requirements for application. Specifying that applicants hold a certificate in compliance with the NFPA® 1001, Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications, an EMT or paramedic license, or other fire service credentials help narrow the number of applicants in many jurisdictions. Fire departments may also require applicants to possess a commercial driver's license or obtain a certain number of college credits or Associate's degree prior to applying.
Written Examination
Subsequent to the application process, a written examination is usually administered. An independent testing agency contracted by the fire department often creates this test. These examinations are usually multiple choice and are designed so that a candidate with no prior fire fighting experience will not be at a disadvantage. Written tests generally feature sections on the following:

- Math
- Reading comprehension
- Mechanical aptitude
- Recognition/observation
- Psychological testing

**Math**
Entrance examinations for fire fighting positions often contain word problems that must be broken down into a mathematical equation and solved. These problems simulate the type of work fire apparatus driver/operators need to be able to perform quickly in their heads on the fireground. These calculations may be needed to determine pump discharge pressures or friction loss for different hose layouts (Figure 1.19).

![Figure 1.19 Good math skills are required to calculate proper pump discharge pressures.](image)

**Reading Comprehension**
Throughout their careers, firefighters must read the following:

- Training bulletins
- Policies
- Manuals
- Study materials for promotional examinations

In order to gauge reading comprehension, many firefighter examinations require the candidate to read a short selection of material. The candidate is then required to answer questions relating to the content of that material. This type of question helps determine the ability of the candidate to retain written material and recognize important content.
Mechanical Aptitude

In the course of their duties, firefighters are required to operate a wide variety of tools under both emergency and non-emergency conditions. A basic understanding of tools and mechanics allows the firefighter to operate more efficiently and may enable him/her to adapt or improvise a solution where the desired tool is not readily available. This aptitude is often tested by presenting questions that consist of a diagram in which the candidate must determine the effect of an event given a series of gears, pulleys, or cylinders.

Recognition/Observation

Many written tests evaluate a candidate’s ability to recognize numerous details in a short period of time by presenting a picture or illustration. After a prescribed period of time, the picture is no longer available for reference and the candidates are required to answer questions about specific details in the picture. Minor points, such as the time on a clock or the number of books on a table, may be used to test observation skills. These observations must then be used to formulate a fire attack plan without delay.

In the process known as “size-up,” a firefighter must quickly observe and interpret the following (Figure 1.20):

- Construction features of a building
- Location and extent of the fire
- Occupants
- Hazards
- Means of access and egress
- Numerous other factors

Figure 1.20 During the size-up process, firefighters must quickly observe and interpret incident factors.
Psychological Testing
Due to the nature of their job, firefighters may be subject to stressful events. In an attempt to ensure candidates are psychologically compatible with firefighting duties, a psychological screening process is often used during the pre-employment evaluation.

Physical Ability Test
The physical ability or agility test is commonly used to measure a candidate’s strength and aerobic condition. The particular evolutions may vary by jurisdiction but are usually designed to approximate the types of activities most common in the field of firefighting. Based on the jurisdiction, the tests may be pass/fail or scored based on time. Generally, the sponsoring agency provides material that explains the various parts of the test long before it is administered. Some agencies even provide a day when candidates may practice on the actual test course. These tests are physically demanding. Candidates should train well in advance to ensure their best possible performance and lessen a chance of injury.

Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) Program
The International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Fire Fighters jointly developed the widely used Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The CPAT examination is comprised of eight stations that must be completed in one continuous sequence. It is a pass/fail evaluation. The maximum time allowed for passing is 10 minutes and 20 seconds. CPAT has been validated as an acceptable method for testing the physical requirements for being a firefighter.

During the test, the candidate must wear long pants, appropriate footwear, a safety helmet with chin strap, gloves and a 50-pound (25 kg) weighted vest to simulate the weight PPE with SCBA. An additional 25 pounds (12.5 kg) (12.5 lbs. per shoulder (6.25 kg) will be added during the first event, but will be removed at the completion of it. Watches and loose or restrictive jewelry may not be worn during the test.

The events are placed in a sequence that best simulates fire scene events while allowing an 85-foot (25 m) walk between events. This walk allows for approximately 20 seconds for recovering and regrouping before the next event. Running is not allowed between events. The events are as follows:

- Stair climb
- Hose drag
- Equipment carry
- Ladder raise and extension
- Forcible entry
- Search
- Rescue
- Ceiling breach and pull
Interview Process
Subsequent to successful completion of a written and physical test, a number of candidates may be contacted to participate in an oral interview process. This process varies by jurisdiction, but it generally consists of two interviews.

Oral Interview
During an oral interview, often referred to as an oral board, candidates are required to answer a variety of questions asked by multiple interviewers. Interviewers are evaluating not only the answers, but the candidate’s appearance, demeanor, and attitude.

In order to maintain a fair process, all candidates are usually asked the same list of questions and are rated by each member of the interview panel. The interviewers will often discuss their impressions in order to arrive at a final score and eliminate subjectivity.

Second Interview
In some cases, a candidate may be asked to return for a second interview. This next step is sometimes referred to as a Chief’s Interview as it is often conducted by the department chief or senior staff members. Usually not scored, this meeting may be used to gain a better perspective of the candidate’s suitability for the position and compatibility with the department. Upon successful completion of this interview, the candidate is likely to proceed to the final stages of the process, which generally include physical and psychological evaluations and a background check.

Probationary Period
New firefighters in both career and volunteer fire departments may expect to serve a probationary period of one to three years. The requirements of this period vary widely based on jurisdiction. Some periods extend from successful completion of a training academy through a specified period of service. Other systems may include the time spent in the training academy as part of a probationary period. Whatever its length, the probationary period is intended to allow the new firefighter or candidate an opportunity to demonstrate a desire to be a member of the fire service and successfully complete the training and other tasks to which he or she is assigned. Failure to do so may result in a request for resignation at any time during the probationary period.

Volunteer Firefighter Selection
Due to the many obligations to careers and families, volunteer firefighters may be difficult to recruit and retain in some communities. The selection process for volunteer firefighters differs greatly from that of career firefighters. Some volunteer fire departments may require a physical examination or written test. Meanwhile, in other departments, an interested person may complete an application and interview with the fire chief or a committee of department members in order to be accepted. Prior certification or fire service knowledge is usually not required as most volunteer departments sponsor their own training programs or send members to a county or state fire academy.
Like career firefighters, volunteers represent their department to the community. They are likewise required to maintain a standard of ethics and professionalism. A background check prior to acceptance as a volunteer is often required in order to conform to the standards that the local jurisdiction requires.

**Fire Service Career Information**

Those considering a career in the fire service often have questions regarding compensation, work schedules, promotions, and retirement. While these details are unique to each jurisdiction, some general information is outlined in the following sections.

In addition to salary and retirement benefits, career firefighters generally receive additional forms of compensation. This compensation may include life and health insurance as well as paid vacation and sick leave. Many departments offer uniform allowance and incentives for firefighters to further their education. These benefits may be provided under a contract that a labor union negotiates on behalf of the workers.

**Pay**

Fire service salaries vary widely by location, organization, and rank. Certifications, education, and length of service typically factor into rates of pay as well. Generally, firefighters in more affluent or larger metropolitan areas earn more than those firefighters in small towns and less affluent communities.

**Hours of Duty**

Career firefighters work a variety of schedules. Very few firefighters work a typical eight-hour day, five-days-per week schedule found in other professions. Generally, only members of a fire department’s administrative staff work traditional business hours. Most firefighters work a longer rotating shift schedule. Generally, a rotating shift schedule is made up of three or four shifts in the public fire service. Military firefighters may work a two shift rotation with straight 24-hour periods on and off duty.

Much of the North American fire service operates a three shift system. Several work schedules are possible using three shifts. However, the most common comprises a straight 24-hour duty shift with 48 hours off duty.

Other jurisdictions may use a four-shift system that revolves around a 10 hour day shift and a 14-hour night shift. Commonly, firefighters will work two 10 hour days, then two 14-hour nights, followed by a cycle of four days off.

**Promotion**

A promotion in the fire service entails increased pay and responsibility. Each fire department may employ different criteria to gain a promotion; however, most departments require an exam or other certification of knowledge and skills. Specialized training and advanced education may also factor into the promotional process as well as credit for length of service. Additional information regarding the roles of various fire service positions follows in a subsequent section of this chapter.
Retirement
Numerous retirement programs are in place for career and even some volunteer firefighters that vary widely between states and provinces. Some combine years of service and a firefighter’s age to determine retirement compensation. Additionally, retired firefighters may receive health care and some form of life insurance coverage for a spouse or other beneficiary.

Some jurisdictions offer volunteer firefighters a retirement package based on years of service to the department. These benefits are commonly called length of service awards programs (LOSAP), which are often partially funded by a state, province, or county government.

Chapter Summary
Fire departments across the nation are organized according to local needs. There are numerous systems in use to provide fire protection, including career, volunteer, paid on-call, and combination fire departments. In addition, many large industrial plants operate their own fire departments to protect large facilities or those involved in hazardous operations.

Firefighters must train and learn new skills throughout their careers. This action may include training at local or state training academies or attending seminars and workshops. In order to advance in the fire service, many firefighters seek a degree from a college or university. Although the application and hiring process for firefighters varies by jurisdiction, this process usually consists of an application period before a written examination and physical agility test. Applicants successful in these stages of the process may undergo a physical examination, psychological screening, and a background check. Members of a panel may also interview the candidates for their compatibility with the goals of the fire service. Furthermore, candidates for firefighter positions generally serve a probationary period in which their skills and general aptitude and attitude for fire fighting may be evaluated.

In the volunteer sector, an entrance examination is not usually required. However, a potential member is often subject to a background check and an interview with the fire chief or committee of members. This process is undertaken to ensure the volunteer is likely to uphold the image and trust the department has built in the community it serves.
Review Questions

1. What are examples of types of incidents that the fire service may respond to?
2. What are some ways that fire departments are categorized by jurisdictions?
3. What are the different types of public fire departments?
4. What are examples of private and federal government fire departments?
5. What are some examples of responsible behaviors and appropriate conduct for firefighters?
6. Why is physical fitness an important aspect of being a firefighter?
7. What are different ways that fire service personnel receive training and education?
8. Why is firefighter certification/credentialing important?
9. What steps might a potential firefighter go through in the selection process?
10. What are some general facts about compensation, work schedules, promotions, and retirement for the fire service?

Chapter 1 Notes