

# How To Study For Fire Department Exams

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Setting a plan of how to reach your fire department promotional goals can be a very intimidating process. There is a multitude of information to sift through. Studying for a fire department promotional exam it can be nothing short of overwhelming. I encourage promotional candidates to look at their future exam through a different set of glasses, those of the person creating the exam.

One of my favorite sayings is, become the test maker, not the test taker. It is important to understand that when a fire department promotional exam is created, the designers meet with fire administration and ask what they would like to see in an exam. The fire chief and the command staff meet with the fire department promotional exam developer and express his or their wishes.

Fire department promotional exams – what to expect: if you were writing the fire department promotional exam, think of what you would see as important information (become the test maker). As a general rule, exams are very predictable. How often have you walked out of a fire department promotional exam and said, “That wasn’t that hard, I should have done better, or, I wished I would have studied the right stuff.”

To prepare for the fire department promotional exam, it is not necessary to become a subject matter expert in any area. Serious candidates should have a thorough working knowledge of a myriad of different operational and administrative issues. Remember that you are NOT studying to beat the fire department promotional exam, rather to learn the position. A candidate who has covered all of his or her bases during the study period will usually perform well in the fire department promotional exam and once awarded the position. Nobody aspires to be appointed to a position and not be competent to function in the role.

Candidates should use the following as a check list to monitor their progress when studying for the fire department promotional exam:

## **All types of fire scenarios:**

- Residential
- High rise
- Strip malls / Light-weight industrial
- Center hallway and garden style apartments (each have different issues)
- Commercial (NFPA 704 diamond)
- Tanker and refineries
- Wildland

## **Emergency Scene Considerations**

- Develop templates for every major size up potential
- Develop a system of tracking resources
- Think big lines, multiple supply lines, (save a spot for the truck)

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- Have a plan for RIC deployment (including tactical frequencies and a leader)
- Have a plan for what to do when you locate a victim
- Don't be afraid to call for multiple alarms
- Don't forget outside agencies
- Have a plan for getting things back to normal

## **Fire department promotional exam candidates should have a plan to handle:**

- Weapons of mass destruction
- Hazardous materials spills
- Multi-Casualty incidents
- Aircraft emergencies
- Marine firefighting
- Refineries
- Trench collapse
- Swift water
- Active shooter incidents

## **Preparing for the Administrative portion of the fire department promotional exam**

- Know the department's policies and procedures, SOP's and SOG's
- Understand the departments progressive discipline system. Be able to quote the steps and understand the documentation process
- Know how to conduct a counseling session using the 8 step process

## **Have a plan to:**

- Address your crew for the first time (crew expectations)
- Train a probationary firefighter
- Coach, mentor, and train your crew
- Document a substandard employee
- Motivate an unmotivated firefighter
- Deal with poor morale
- Enforce the policies and procedures
- Interact with other officers
- Interact with fire management
- What would you do IF:
  - Firefighter stuck with a needle
  - Firefighter under the influence
  - Firefighters involved in a fight in the station
  - Unmotivated firefighter
  - Firefighter habitually late
  - Firefighter with a poor attitude
  - Firefighter rude to a patient

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- Understand the injury on duty policy and how a firefighter returns to duty following injury

### **Fire Department Promotional Oral Interviews**

- Know the job for which you are applying
- Find a role model who can teach you the idiosyncrasies of the position
- Develop thoughts and ideas about current events
- Understand the daylight(staff) positions

### **Ways to prepare for the fire department promotional exam**

- Read fire department publications and internet chat boards to stay up on current events
- Become an active participant in departmental committees/project teams
- Be familiar with the problems facing your department and the fire service
- Read departmental memos
- Understand the rules to the testing process
- Prepare for EACH part of the process early, NOT after the previous phase is complete