

How do I find out which fire departments are accepting applications? –

Phase 1: Developing your firefighter candidate research binder

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This is the third installment of a series of articles intended to prepare the aspiring firefighter to be the best they can be.

Finding out which fire departments are accepting applications can be a very challenging task. I've heard too many candidates that have missed out on the chance to put in their application to become a firefighter with their dream fire department because of a lack of preparation on their part. For some reason or another, they had not done their homework and relied on one of the seven "reactive" methods of finding out which fire departments are accepting applications that I had discussed in the previous article.

In that last article, I discussed the different ways you can be reactive in regards to finding which fire departments are accepting applications, and I touched on how you can be proactive. Remember, those reactive methods are not a waste of your time or money. They should be considered to be another "tool in your toolbox" to assist you in your pursuit of becoming a firefighter. If they were a waste of time or money, I would not have mentioned them. I do consider those reactive methods as "back-up plans."

I want to stress the importance of not relying just on one method of finding out which fire departments are accepting applications; but by actually having a game plan that will guide you from point A to point B, and so forth. Becoming a firefighter is rarely accomplished without an action plan of goals and objectives to get you there. You wouldn't set out on a cross-country trip without a road map, would you? Why should this process be any different?

WHY DO THIS?

The reason you are doing this is to start your own data base of fire departments within your geographical region. It is going to be your template for conducting future research, which will be discussed in the next article. This list will become your "Master List" of fire departments that are found within a 50 mile radius of your residence. Once you have completed the counties and cities that are within that radius, it will then be time to expand your search to the counties and cities that are within 100 miles of your residence, then 150 miles, and then 200 miles. I would also suggest listing "big-city or large fire departments" that are out of the 200 mile radius. The reason why is because it might be worth your time and effort to drive or fly to take a test that is 500 miles away if there are plans to hire a lot of firefighters, open up new fire stations in growing areas (e.g., the Las Vegas or Phoenix Metropolitan areas).

HOW THIS CONCEPT WILL BE BROKEN UP:

- Phase 1 – *Developing your firefighter candidate research binder*
- Phase 2 – *Organizing your firefighter candidate research binder into chapters*
- Phase 3 – *Obtaining the necessary information for your firefighter candidate research binder*

GETTING STARTED:

To be **proactive**, it is going to take some time and some energy, and I suggest you start by doing the following items:

I. PHASE 1 (Developing your firefighter candidate research binder)

A. Obtain the necessary tools and equipment.

To do this properly, you will need the following items that are available from any office supply store (you might even already have them):

- One two-inch binder
- Blank ruled paper, 8 ½” x 11”
- Section dividers
- Pens / pencils to write with

B. Get a map of the state you live in and any adjacent states.

First of all, if you are not already a member of an automobile association like AAA, I would highly suggest becoming one. Besides providing road service to you (which might come in handy with all of the driving you are going to start doing in your pursuit of becoming a firefighter), they also usually provide maps free of charge.

Start out by penciling in a dot, which will designate where you live. Then take a ruler and go up to the legend that tells you how many miles each inch equals. This is the time to find out how serious you are with the testing process – how much you are willing to do, or how far you are willing to go to get a badge. Find out how many inches equal 50 miles, 100 miles, 150 miles, and 200 miles. Once you have that information, start drawing a circle around your residence (the dot you initially penciled in) to designate a radius of 50, 100, 150, and 200 miles around your residence. This is how you are going to start your search.

C. Start with the 50 miles that are closest to your residence.

On a piece of paper, write down each of the counties that are within that 50 mile radius, starting with the one you live in and then working outwards. On another sheet of paper, write the name of the county, and then list each city that is found within that county (alphabetical order) on the left side of the page. On the right side of the page, write the words “Fire Department.” Then go to the next closest county, writing the

name of that county down in addition to each of the cities found within that county. Do this for the 50 miles closest to your residence.

D. What your information will look like:

For example, I live in Santa Clara County. I would write the following information down in the following format:

<u>COUNTY:</u>	Santa Clara County	<u>FIRE DEPT:</u>
<u>CITY:</u>	Campbell	
	Cupertino	
	Gilroy	
	Los Altos	
	Los Altos Hills	
	Los Gatos	
	Milpitas	
	Monte Sereno	
	Morgan Hill	
	Mountain View	
	Palo Alto	
	San Jose	
	San Martin	
	Santa Clara	
	Saratoga	
	Sunnyvale	

Take the next closest county and do the same. There about seven other counties that are within 50 miles of my residence. Guess what, I would need to then list out those seven other counties and include every city or town found within those counties.

NOTE: If you notice, there is a blank to the right of each city underneath the words Fire Department. This information will be covered later.

In the next article, we will continue onto Phase 2, where we will discuss actually putting together the separate chapters of your binder to make the most out of your research to insure you are properly preparing yourself and using your time wisely!

Until then, good luck, and keep your head up – there is a badge out there with your name on it. It is up to you to find it!