



FIRE & EMS NEWS

August 2003

Volume 2 – Issue 2

Welcome to the latest issue of the Fire & EMS News! My goal is to provide you with information about your Chabot College Fire Technology Program, the local Fire Departments, in addition to other information that might be beneficial to you in your pursuit of better preparing yourself for the career of your dreams! Some of the highlights of this issue include:

- FREE – Fire / EMS related email newsletters
- Instructor / Volunteer opportunity (a.k.a. resume building opportunity)
- Locating firefighter testing opportunities
- FREE – Oral Board Seminar at Chabot College
- FREE – Fire service directory of California Fire Departments
- Correction from June 2003 issue of the Fire & EMS news – website link for the Perfect Firefighter Candidate bulletin board
- Chabot College Fire Technology website update – Firefighter Hiring Process Components
- Fall 2003 Chabot College Registration information – IMPORTANT INFORMATION!

FREE FIRE / EMS RELATED EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

I am assuming that you have heard the phrase "knowledge is power." I firmly believe this is true; especially in regards to preparing yourself to become a firefighter and even after you have obtained that firefighter position of your dreams. Many oral interview panels ask questions that test your knowledge of the fire service. Keeping on top of current events in the fire and EMS world is critical. Obtaining your 2-year degree in Fire Technology only provides you with enough knowledge to make you a safe beginner. It is up to you to stay on top of the fire service, especially with current trends and techniques. To become a master of your craft and become comfortable with the thought that to be successful in whatever you do, you must continue educating yourself. As soon as you stop educating yourself and thinking that you know it all, that is when accidents can occur and we put others and ourselves at risk.

One way to stay on top of the fire service is by subscribing to Fire and EMS related publications. While it is very worthwhile to start building a library of material that can assist you throughout your career, it can get quite expensive (but can be used as a tax write off once you become a firefighter - consult with your tax specialist to be sure). An alternative to subscribing to Fire and EMS related publications is to subscribe to the various **FREE** email newsletters that

are available from some of those publications. Many of them provide daily or weekly updates on fire and EMS related topics that can provide you with more knowledge that can hopefully make you a better prepared firefighter candidate. Some of the free email newsletters I have come across include:

California State Firefighters Association - Go to their website at <http://www.csfa.net> and then go down to the area that states, "SUBSCRIBE TO THE CSFA NEWSLETTER." CSFA is an organization that represents both volunteer and paid firefighters throughout the state. This is an excellent resource for you as a candidate. Their website also provides extensive news of firefighter related issues, an extensive LINKS section, numerous training opportunities, and information on how to become a CSFA member; something I highly suggest each and every firefighter candidate doing. They provide you with a monthly magazine and with numerous benefits as a member. As a student, you can join as an "Associate member."

Fire Engineering Magazine - Go to <http://www.fire-eng.com> and scroll down the home page and on the left side of the page, look for "SUBSCRIPTIONS"; directly underneath that will be "E-NEWSLETTER". Click on that link and you can subscribe to their free email newsletter. For those of you that are not aware of Fire Engineering, they put out a monthly publication that is probably the best in the fire service.

Firehouse Magazine - Go to <http://www.firehouse.com/insider/alerts.html> and you can subscribe to their daily newsletter that provides a wealth of nationwide fire and EMS related information and news topics. Their home page at <http://www.firehouse.com> is probably the most extensive and complete resource for fire related information.

Fire-Rescue Magazine - Fire-Rescue Magazine a monthly magazine that is published by JEMS (see JEMS below for more information). Go to <http://www.jems.com> and scroll down to "SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEW FIRE RESCUE EMAIL NEWSLETTER." Fire-Rescue magazine is another good resource of information for the fire service.

Journal of Emergency Services (JEMS) - JEMS is the leading EMS related magazine currently in publication. Go to <http://www.jems.com> and scroll down to "Subscribe to the new JEMS email newsletter." They will then send you EMS related information, usually about once a week or once every two weeks. While on their website, take a look at what their site has to offer. This is an excellent wealth of information in regards to the EMS world. If you are planning to become an EMT, if you are an EMT that wants to do a better job for you patients, if you have the desire to become a paramedic, or if you are a paramedic that wants to keep on top of current EMT trends and techniques, this is a magazine I highly suggest that you subscribe to. Subscription information can be found on the website above.

Chabot College Fire Technology mailing list – Some of you might be on this mailing list already. If you are, I hope you are finding it to be worthwhile. If not, here are some of the things I will try to make you aware of if you are subscribed to this FREE resource:

- Notification of fire and EMS employment opportunities
- Notification of when the new issue of the Chabot College Fire & EMS News is available

- Notification of various newsworthy items relating to fire and EMS that might have occurred nationwide
- Notification of volunteer opportunities
- Notification of information that is relevant to **YOUR** fire technology and EMS program at Chabot College
- Your name and email address will **NOT** be shared with anyone. I promise to keep it confidential.

If you are interested in subscribing to this valuable resource, or you think you have already subscribed and have not received anything from me in the last month (which means your email address is not cooperating) and you would like to back on the email list, feel free to email me at sprziborowski@chabotcollege.edu and let me know that you're interested in being on the email mailing list. In the subject heading of your email to me, please write something to the effect of "Chabot Fire mailing list" or something similar that alerts me to what you are asking of me. On the average, I probably send out a few emails a week, so I process not to bombard you with useless information every day. I hope what I send to you will be worthwhile in some capacity.

What are you waiting for? This is a no-brainer! I am a firm believer in the fact that you should subscribe to at least one fire or EMS related publication to keep yourself up-to-date. This is not meant to replace your subscribing to publications; it is meant to supplement the information that is given in those publications.

Besides the above publications, there are two other email newsletters worth mentioning:

"Captain Bob" Smith, a retired Hayward Fire Department Captain, puts out a monthly newsletter titled the "Fire Zine" that provides information to the firefighter candidate on how to do better at oral interviews. You can get onto his mailing list by going to his website at <http://www.eatstress.com/faq.htm> and scrolling down to the box that allows you to input your email address. Captain Bob's primary focus is on improving your oral interview scores. Besides the free "Fire Zine," his website provides a wealth of information to the firefighter candidate as well as the promotional fire service candidate. [Captain Bob's website](#) is one of the best resources around.

Don McNea Fire School out of Ohio puts out an email newsletter that provides information on various departments nationwide that are accepting applications. They also have a variety of books for sale and information for the firefighter candidate, especially in regards to written tests, psychological examinations, and entry-level and promotional testing in general. The Don McNea Fire School is the only resource I have seen that specifically assists the candidate with the written examination, as well as other related portions of the hiring process. Go to their website at <http://www.fireprep.com> for more information.

NOTE: *All of the above resources are for your information only. I am not endorsing any of the above individuals, services, and/or products. I have my opinions about each and every one of them; however it is up to you to do your own research and find out what will most assist you in becoming a firefighter! Find*

out for yourself and take the time to look into each of the websites to see if you may benefit from them.

INSTRUCTOR / VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Most firefighter candidates are always looking at that edge, to make themselves unique as well as more marketable. One way to do that is to become an instructor at something. I have been an instructor of various Fire and EMS subjects for almost 11 years now. About the time I received my EMT certification; I went to the [American Red Cross](#) and signed up for their First Aid and CPR certification course that they offer.

First of all, it was a great way to keep up my skills since becoming an instructor requires you to stay sharp in that area you are supposed to teach. Second, it was a great way to perform volunteer work / community service since they are always looking for volunteer instructors to teach first aid and safety. Third, it was something to put on the resume that would hopefully make me stand above some of the other candidates.

Many fire departments presently provide free CPR and First Aid training to their community. If you were aware of this fact (because you had properly done your research prior to the oral interview), you could sell the fact that you are an instructor, that you have been already performing community service in this capacity, and that this is something you would like to get involved with (after you have completed probation) to help better serve the community.

For more information about instructor classes and other classes the American Red Cross has to offer around the Bay Area, call (800) 520-5433 or visit the Bay Area Red Cross website at <http://www.bayarea-redcross.org/Courses/courses.html> (once there, click on link on the top of the page titled COURSES). What are you waiting for? This is an excellent way to add to your resume, keep your skills up, and have the chance to give something back to your community by the way of volunteer work!

LOCATING FIREFIGHTER TESTING OPPORTUNITIES

In the [July 2003](#) issue of the Chabot College Fire & EMS News, I listed a couple of companies that you can pay to have access to nationwide notification of when fire departments are accepting applications for various positions. While those services are necessary resources you should be paying for and using, they do not eliminate the need for you to actually be proactive and do your own research. Successful candidates will not be surprised or shocked when a fire department announces that they are testing for firefighter. If you have properly prepared and planned for their testing process, you will have already had a pretty good idea of the approximate time frame that this might be occurring. Well, how do you do this you might say? Do I need a crystal ball? Do I need to call Miss Cleo?

To be proactive in your search, you need to directly contact fire departments and their personnel/human resources department and keep track of your process. Contrary to popular belief, most fire departments do not put on their own testing process. If they are a city fire department, the city personnel/human resources department usually handles that process (along with testing for other city agencies such as police, public works, recreation, etc.). If they are a county fire department, the county personnel/human resources department usually handles that process. If the fire department is a special district, such as the [San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District](#), [the Santa Clara County Fire Department](#), the [Los Angeles County Fire Department](#), or the [Sacramento Metropolitan Fire Department](#), then they usually have their own personnel/human resources department located at the fire department headquarters.

Here is my suggestion to you to be successful (besides relying on one or more of the services to provide you with firefighter testing information). You need to start contacting fire departments and their personnel/human resource departments that are within the county you live in, and then start working outwards in other adjacent counties. How do I find out where to call? Well, one of the best tools you have at your disposal is the internet. One of the resources that is available to you is the [LINKS](#) section of the [Chabot College Fire Technology and EMS website](#). I have listed virtually every San Francisco Bay Area fire department that I am aware of (If you know of ones I have not listed, give me the link and I will add it). You can start there by clicking on the fire department website link and then looking for any words to the effect of “hiring, jobs, employment, firefighter recruitment, testing information, etc.”

Many fire departments have become proactive by putting recruitment information directly on their website (even if their personnel/human resources department handles the process). Also, on each individual fire department website, you can also find out their headquarters address, phone number, and other relevant information. Most of the fire departments websites are also extensions of their city’s website, so you can usually direct yourself to the city website as well (to locate the personnel/human resources page).

Another good resource to use when looking for city and county websites is the following link of the Association of Bay Area Governments at <http://www.abag.ca.gov> – once on their home page; you can find numerous links to assist you in your testing process. On the right side of the page, under PUBLIC AGENCIES, you will see the button to click for cities and counties. They have most bay area city and county websites listed there. This would be something worth bookmarking for future reference.

Once on each city or county’s website, look for words such as “departments, jobs, employment, personnel, human resources, etc.” Once you click on that link, you can usually find out what jobs are open, whether or not they take interest cards, their address, their phone number (so you can directly speak to someone and ask them your questions), their 24-hour job line (so you can keep checking back for any firefighter openings), job descriptions, salaries and benefits, and downloadable job applications that you may be able to fill out on your computer (and looks a lot nicer than you typing or handwriting it).

A good idea to assist you in this process is to have a spiral notebook or binder with blank paper in it that you dedicate space to. I like using a binder because it is easy to add pages to. Start the beginning of the book with the fire departments closest to your residence and work from there. Group the listings by county to keep it clean. Within each county, list every fire department or city alphabetically to make it simple to use. How do you know which fire departments are listed in each county? Well a good resource that is free to you from the California Professional Firefighters to download is listed in the next section. Once you download it, you can keep it in your binder for future reference.

If I call a fire department, what questions should I ask them?

- When they plan to next test for firefighter
- What they usually require candidates to have to take their test
- When they last tested for firefighter
- How many firefighters did they hire? How many were paramedics vs. EMT?
- Do they accept interest cards?
- Do they have any information about the position they can mail me?

If I call the personnel/human resources department, what questions should I ask them?

- When they plan to next test for firefighter
- What they usually require candidates to have to take their test
- When they last tested for firefighter
- How many firefighters did they hire? How many were paramedics vs. EMT?
- Do they accept interest cards?
- Do they have any information about the position they can mail me?
- When do they suggest that I call back to get more information

As you see, you'll basically be asking the same questions. The trick is that will probably learn something new from each person you talk to. It is not uncommon to have one person tell you that they don't know when they'll be testing again for firefighter, and another person tell you that it will be sometime in the next few months. While you should not be a pest, you should make an effort to contact each city or county personnel office every month or so. Just because a department has a hiring freeze today, doesn't mean that won't change tomorrow or next week. That also goes the opposite way. Don't get your hopes up when you hear someone from the department tell you they are going to hire 50 or so in the next few months. That could also change at the drop of a hat due to projected retirement's not occurring, budget problems, or other various reasons.

I remember getting my hopes up with the Fresno Fire Department. While going through the Background Investigation process, we were all told that the department was going to hire about 15 paramedics. This was awesome since they were only putting about 20 or 30 people through the background process. Well, after the background investigations were done, all of us were informed that the City Council had just approved the elimination of the Paramedic program, and that the department wasn't going to be hiring 15 paramedics. They were only going to hire about 5 candidates, with EMT being the minimum requirement since they didn't need paramedics

anymore. Talk about having the rug pulled out from under my feet! Oh well, what could I have done? Of course it was frustrating, but I had no recourse (obviously I wasn't one of the five selected to continue) except to just keep my chin up, stay motivated, and continue testing for firefighter positions. The point I'm trying to make is remain flexible, don't ever get your hopes up (you're not actually hired until you receive the letter signed by the Fire Chief and you are actually starting the fire academy), and don't believe everything you're initially told!

FREE ORAL BOARD SEMINAR

On Sunday November 2, from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m., "Captain Bob" Smith will be providing a FREE Oral Interview seminar. This will occur at Chabot College in a room T.B.A. Captain Bob is a retired Captain from the Hayward Fire Department who has been on numerous interview panels and has helped countless candidates obtain their badges. He will provide you with tips on how to better prepare yourself for the oral interviews you will be taking or have already taken and not done as well as you possibly could have on. Remember that the oral interview is probably the MOST important phase of the firefighter hiring process since most fire departments score this portion 100% of your total score.

For more information about Captain Bob, visit his website at <http://www.eatstress.com> He has numerous free tips and suggestions to score better on the oral interview. To register for this unique and excellent opportunity, email me at sprziborowski@chabotcollege.edu and let me know how many people plan to attend. Hurry, seats are limited! If you need directions to Chabot College, click here: <http://www.chabotcollege.edu/student-service/where.html>

Oral interviews are the toughest thing for most people (going for jobs in any line of work, not just the fire department). Why not take this free opportunity to learn at least one new thing? If you learn something that even just raises your score by 1%, it was worth your time to attend!

CORRECTION – Perfect Firefighter Candidate bulletin board web address listed in June 2003 issue of the Fire & EMS News

In the [June 2003](#) issue of the Chabot College Fire & EMS news, there was an article on the [Perfect Firefighter Candidate](#) – specifically advising you of the services they have to offer you. Since that issue was published, they have changed the web address for their bulletin board feature to <http://www.firecareers.com/forum.cfm> - It can still be accessed off their main website address at [firecareers.com](http://www.firecareers.com), however I wanted to provide you with the correct direct link. As I mentioned in the June issue, their testing services are a must-have for any firefighter candidate, and their bulletin board service that is free of charge is an excellent way to post any questions you might have and receive answers from various fire service professionals and other firefighter candidates.

FREE FIRE SERVICE DIRECTORY - Courtesy of the California Professional Firefighters

The California Professional Firefighters (CPF) website, <http://www.cpf.org> has a new feature that I think most, if not all of us, can benefit from. They have compiled a fire service directory that includes every fire department in the State of California. Information contained in this directory includes department addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and website addresses. I highly suggest you take a look for yourself and even consider downloading the entire document to keep in your research binder that you should have already started by now. To download a copy of the directory, free of charge, go to: <http://www.cpf.org/fddirectory.jsp>

CHABOT COLLEGE FIRE TECHNOLOGY WEBSITE – New Section Added

One of the newest sections I have added to the [Chabot College Fire Technology website](http://www.chabotfire.com) is a section titled “Firefighter Hiring Process Components.” This section is dedicated to explaining and providing some detail and suggestions on the different phases of the hiring process that you are going to be expected to complete, if you want to become a firefighter. To view this page, go to: <http://www.chabotfire.com/Process.htm>

While this section is still under construction, I wanted to include information that will better prepare you for each of the phases of the hiring process. These phases can include (but are not limited to) obtaining an application, finding out who is testing, the written examination, the oral interview, the physical ability test, the background investigation, the medical evaluation, the chief’s oral interview, etc. Many people have questions about those different phases of the process and I am trying to put together information to assist you with those phases of the hiring process as well as provide you with internet resources that can assist you above and beyond what I have thought of.

FALL 2003 - CHABOT COLLEGE REGISTRATION FOR FIRE RELATED COURSES

With the fall 2003 courses beginning on August 18, I wanted to make a few comments about registration for this semester:

- The EMT course (Health 81 and 83) filled up shortly after registration. This is not something that has never happened before, it happens every semester. So if you plan to register for the EMT course in the future, ensure that you sign up as soon as you are eligible to do so, and don't procrastinate!
- The firefighter 1 academy (Fire Technology 90A, 90B, and 90C) also filled up shortly after registration began. This did not surprise me either, based on the fact that we have reduced the number of prerequisite classes from eight to four. That is a decision I will stand behind and take the heat for because in the long run, I truly feel it will do the greatest good for the greatest number. Every semester, the firefighter 1 academy accepts up to 32 students (versus 44 for lecture classes). Last semester (spring 2003), we only had 25 even apply for the

academy! We started with seven empty seats! Upon further investigation, it was determined that we were losing students to other colleges because we had so many prerequisites to get in.

Further, it was taking a student up to two years to get their firefighter 1 academy certificate (because of the two or three semesters of prerequisites). If I had my way, everyone would have to get their full A.A. Degree at the bare minimum just to get hired (hey, what can I say? I believe in the value of education. For the money we make, I don't think it is too much to ask for. The degree doesn't make you better than someone without a degree - what it does is show that you can make a commitment and follow it through and that you can also be able to demonstrate a certain level of competency).

Enough about my opinions; getting back to losing students to other programs. I found it frustrating that someone couldn't get everything they wanted in one location (I believe in one stop shopping as well. Don't even get me going on why we don't have a paramedic program. I think we could support one; however the current political situation within the paramedic training realm will not allow it. I could go on for hours on that subject). As a community college, we are here to meet the needs of our local students, and we were not doing that. The problem that caused is now that we have reduced the prerequisites, there are MORE students eligible to get into the academy than there are spots available. Predictable? Yes. Unacceptable or unrealistic? Not really.

I received numerous emails from students that did not get into the academy this semester. They felt it was unfair. Some felt it was going to delay their getting to become a firefighter. Well, not to be harsh, but life is not fair sometimes. But think about how we do registration. It might not be fair to their situation, but it is fair as a whole. Since we do not have "waiting lists," adds are done on a first-come, first-serve basis, as well as by priority number. So it is fair to those students who have the highest priority numbers (meaning they have been attending the college the longest, and have also completed more units than someone with a lower priority number).

The priority number system doesn't play favorites and allows registration based on merit. Based on this, don't be surprised if the academy (or other popular classes) fill up quickly the next few semesters. At some point it should level out. Also, the economy or the state budget crisis haven't helped either. More people are looking for work (especially with the government - like firefighter positions) and the colleges are cutting classes or not allowing additional classes to meet the increased demand of students. A double-edged sword!

Here are my suggestions for future registration to help reduce your frustration:

- Sign up for classes the first day your are eligible to do so.
- If you don't get into a class because it is closed (full), check the CLASS WEB section on the main Chabot website at <http://www.chabotcollege.edu> **DAILY!** It is not uncommon to have someone drop a class after registering for it, or getting dropped because they did not pay their fees or have outstanding fees due to the college.

- If that does not work, you are always allowed to show up at the first class meeting and attempt to add into the class. For the EMT class, it is not uncommon to get 10 no-shows and another 10 students that did not meet all of the prerequisites stated in the schedule. Besides the required prerequisite class, Health 61, there are certain requirements the student has to mail in prior to the first day of class, such as proof of a TB test, MMR immunization, copies of their CPR and Emergency Response cards, etc. That leaves 20 extra spots (out of a possible 54)! Many times I have taken everyone that has wanted to add in! **You have nothing to lose by showing up the first day, except for the time it took you to be there!** Now the firefighter 1 academy is a little different. Of the 32 spots, I doubt there has ever been that many (if any) no-shows on the first night. Further

Granted, there are no guarantees that you will be added in (remember that adds are done based on priority number). An instructor has no obligation to add you into a class. If they do, it is not a right you have, it is not something you are "entitled to," it is something that is a privilege they are extending to you. The instructors are not getting any more money for having more students than is required for them to have in their union contract.

- If all else fails, you should have had a better plan in place! Before you go to the "woe is me" thought process, think about this. Most successful people in life don't try to get ahead (or stay ahead) by always doing things without a backup plan (or plan b, or contingency plan; whatever you want to call it). As the old saying goes, ***"DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY ARE HATCHED," and "DON'T PUT ALL OF YOUR EGGS INTO ONE BASKET."***

I get students calling me saying "I want to get into Chabot because I've heard it's the best." Well, I appreciate the compliments, but I also have to wonder why they put their eggs into one basket? When you are testing for the position of firefighter (which everyone can agree is very competitive), you always have to have contingency plans in place because things almost never go the way you expect them to go.

Let's say that your dream is to become a San Francisco Firefighter, and you only take that test. Your chances for success are drastically reduced because there are so many variables to think about. Classes get cancelled. Hiring goes in waves. Requirements to get hired can change (hopefully you have properly looked into the future to predict these changes, and have thus properly prepared yourself. Requiring a paramedic license is a good example of this. Many candidates were (and still are) blindsided by this concept.

What if S.F. only tests every other year or every three years (which is not uncommon)? By not taking other fire department exams or continuing your education in some form or fashion, you run the risk of being passed by or being left out in the cold (and it was very predictable that it would happen to you because of your lack of planning!). Don't let this happen to you - always have backup plans in place. If you don't get into Chabot's academy for example, well have you also been applying for other academies? Have you been looking into paramedic schools? Have you been looking at spending the semester finishing your other degree requirements? The list can go on and on.

- Don't get me wrong; I'm not trying to burst your bubble or de-motivate you. I'm actually trying to do the opposite. I'm trying to motivate you to be the best you can be, to have as little disappointments in getting that badge as possible, and to be successful in your pursuit of becoming a firefighter. I'm just trying to be realistic. You deserve reality and up front information, not something that has been sugarcoated to reduce "hurting your feelings."

CLOSING COMMENTS

I hope you have found this newsletter somewhat valuable. If you have learned one new thing, then I think I've done my job. I truly want to see everyone succeed, and I also really enjoy doing what I do. This program is your program. It can only get better with your assistance. There is an old saying, don't just give me problems – give me solutions! I can't read your minds, so please provide me with feedback. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or want me to clarify any rumors you might have heard. Thank you very much!

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- **Chabot College web site:** www.chabotcollege.edu

***** PLEASE FEEL FREE TO PASS THIS ON TO YOUR FRIENDS OR CO-WORKERS*****

The Fine Print:

- If you would like to be added to our mailing list (no, I won't give your email address out to others), email me at sprziborowski@chabotcollege.edu and I will add you to the list. Benefits of being on the mailing list include being notified when the latest Fire & EMS news is published, and being notified of firefighter testing opportunities, volunteer opportunities, or training opportunities.
- If you know of someone who wants to receive this newsletter (as well as other updates) email me at sprziborowski@chabotcollege.edu and I will place them on the mailing list.
- If you want to take your name off of the mailing list, just send me an email at sprziborowski@chabotcollege.edu and in the subject heading, and type in "unsubscribe from mailing list" and I will remove your name.