



FIRE NEWS

July 2002

Volume 1 – Issue 1

Welcome to the first edition of the Fire News! The goal is to put out a monthly newsletter that will keep you informed of up to date information regarding the Chabot College Fire Technology Program, the local Fire Departments, and the Fire Service in general. The focus will be on providing information to you that will educate you, while also giving you an insight about what is going on in the fire service and in **your** Fire Technology Program at Chabot College.

For those of you who have not met me yet, I encourage you to introduce yourself to me. I will try to do the same to you. I want to be a resource to you in your pursuit of the badge. I don't have all of the answers, but I think I should be able to at least point you in the right direction. I plan to do my best in assisting you with becoming a firefighter, and I strongly encourage any feedback or suggestions you might have.

I have been in the fire service for a little over 10 years now, starting as a student at Chabot College in 1991, after having completed my B.S. Degree at California State University, Hayward. I completed my EMT, Firefighter 1 academy, Certificate of Achievement, and A.A. Degree in Fire Technology, all while at Chabot College. I also spent almost two years in the work experience program, riding along with the Oakland Fire Department. I then went to Paramedic school, which really opened up a lot of doors. I am presently completing my Master's Degree in Emergency Services Administration, and am a certified Fire Officer, Master Instructor, Fire Prevention Officer I, Public Education Officer I, and Fire Investigator I. I cannot stress enough the value and importance of education and training.

I have been with the Santa Clara County Fire Department for almost seven years now, starting as a Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic, and presently a Captain now for a little over a year. I am presently assigned to the suppression division, working on an Engine company. In addition to my suppression duties, I also perform the position of Safety Officer on a rotating basis on my off days. I have been teaching classes at Chabot College since 1993, and was offered (and graciously accepted) the position of Fire Technology Coordinator in January of this year.

Sincerely,

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Summer 2002 Overview

This summer we were able to successfully hold (2) Fire Technology classes – Fire Technology 51 (Fire Service Operations) and Fire Technology 65 (ICS 200, Haz Mat First Responder – Operations, and Cultural Diversity). This is something that has not been done for a while. We always have the Fire Technology 95 and 96 (Work Experience), since students want to continue their internships with the fire departments they are assigned to. Thanks to the hard work of Tony Perry, one of the Fire Technology students (who coordinated getting enough students to hold the classes), and the two instructors who gave up valuable time away from their families, John Torres and John McPartland, we were able to put on both of those classes. Although this won't help many of you folks, in the future, I do plan on holding a couple of summer courses each year.

Chabot College Fire Technology Web Site

For those of you that have not seen it yet, the Chabot College Fire Technology Web Site is now up and running! The direct link is <http://chabotde.clpccd.cc.ca.us/users/sprziborowski> It can also be accessed off of the Chabot College main web site at <http://www.chabotcollege.edu> and then going to academic programs, then Health and Natural Sciences, and then clicking on either the Emergency Medical Technician Link or the Fire Technology link. It is still in the infancy stages. I want this to be a resource for you to use in your pursuit of the badge. I know it needs pictures and other “bells and whistles,” but they will come as I get more proficient with it. The main features of the web site are the following areas:

- **2002-2003 Course Offerings** – See what the present courses being offered are, and also plan ahead to the Spring of next year and see what the tentative schedule is.
- **News** – Take a look here to see what is new on the site, or newsworthy. If I do something major to the web site, I'll include it here.
- **AA Degree and Certificate of Achievement in Fire Technology Information** – Go to that section for the latest information on requirements for both educational goals.
- **Office Hours** – Since my office hours are varied, go there to see when I expect to be available. Due to unforeseen events, those hours are sometimes not set in stone. To be sure that I will be available, call me and set up an appointment.
- **Firefighter 1 Academy** – Detailed information about the Chabot College Firefighter 1 Academy.
- **Firefighter 1 Certification** – Detailed information about obtaining your California State Firefighter 1 Certificate.
- **Volunteer Opportunities** – Most fire departments expect that you have performed some type of community service or volunteer work prior to getting hired. Many Fire Department Union Locals (you will be a union member as a firefighter) expect that their members perform some type of volunteer work. Go to this section for different volunteer opportunities and links to volunteer organization web sites.
- **Training Opportunities** – This section is for classes that are not offered at Chabot College, but may be of some benefit to you in your pursuit of the badge. Included here is a link to the California State Fire Marshal's office on-line statewide schedule of classes that is updated monthly. This includes every state certified course offered statewide.
- **EMT / Paramedic Information** – Go here for information on the Chabot College EMT program. Although Chabot does not presently have a paramedic program, I have included links to many paramedic schools that are offered throughout the state.

- **Jobs** – While I am not planning to go into the business of notifying everyone about open firefighter positions, I do plan on including firefighter and firefighter-related positions that are local, unique, or are asked of me by a specific fire department.
- **Links** – I have compiled a very extensive list of links. Almost every fire department in the bay area is listed here, as are many of the major fire departments nationwide. I have also included most of the EMS agencies within the state, career assistance web sites, and fire and EMS related associations or organizations. If you need to do some fire or EMS related research for a class or for obtaining a badge, here is a great place to start.

Curriculum Changes on the Horizon

Starting the Fall of 2003, there will be a few changes to the Fire Technology Program. I have taken the advice and suggestions of some of the students to hopefully make your program a better program. I feel we have a great Fire Technology Program here at Chabot, but it can always be made better.

Presently the Firefighter 1 Academy consists of three classes – Fire Technology 90A, 90B, and 90C. There are also seven (7) prerequisite courses. I am trying to reduce that number. Some students have said they can go to other academies that have fewer prerequisites. Look at it this way. All academies are required to provide the same information. Some do it with no prerequisites and a long academy (sometimes 40 hours per week); others do it with many prerequisites and a short academy (part-time, 16 to 20 hours per week). We have been doing it the latter way. I want to find a balance point.

- **COMBINING FIRE TECHNOLOGY 65 AND 86:** Beginning Fall 2003, we will be combining Fire Technology 65 and 86 to make up a new Fire Technology 90D class. This will add four weeks to the firefighter 1 academy, which presently contains 12 weeks. That will still be within a semester, and end up at 16 weeks. This will eliminate 65 as being a prerequisite. ***IMPORTANT NOTE:*** The best way to schedule your classes would be to have both 65 and 86 completed prior to the Fall 2003 semester. If you just have one of the two completed, you will still have to take the whole 90D. If you have neither class completed, then you will still have to take the whole 90D. Taking both of the classes either this semester or Spring 2003, will save you four extra weeks at the end of your academy in Fall 2003.
- **REDUCING NUMBER OF ACADEMY PREREQUISITES:** The seven prerequisite courses for the academy are Health 61, Health 81, Fire Technology 50, 51, 52, 53, and 65. I am trying to reduce that number to about three or four classes, but it is not confirmed yet. Remember, if we are able to reduce the number of prerequisites, it won't take effect until Fall of 2003. This shouldn't affect you if you get into the academy either Spring 2003 or Fall 2003. While many of these changes might not directly benefit you, they will benefit future students.

Resume Tips for this issue

- Keep it to ONE page!
- Have someone proof read it before you send it!
- Ensure that your contact information is complete on the top (I have seen resumes where people forgot to list their name, their address, and even their phone numbers!)

- Do not list references on your resume (or the phrase – “references available upon request.”). They just take up space and most departments don’t care about references until you start the background interview process. *THE ONLY NAME ON YOUR RESUME SHOULD BE YOUR OWN NAME!*
- Tailor your Objective to the agency you are testing for. It is more personalized. To become a Firefighter for the Alameda County Fire Department is straight, to the point, and sounds better than a paragraph starting out “to obtain a position in the fire service where I will be able to utilize my knowledge, skills, and abilities,.....” That sounds impersonal and makes it look like you send the same resume out to everyone.
- If you’re not updating your resume at least once a month, *YOU’RE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO BECOME A FIREFIGHTER!* You should have completed some class, obtained another certificate, volunteered some more hours, etc. If you’re only updating it once every 6 months, you’re probably not doing as much as you maybe can.

General Testing Tips for this issue

- You should be taking every firefighter exam you qualify for. I had a student over the summer tell me that he hadn’t started testing because he “wasn’t ready to.” If you’re taking fire classes, you’re ready. If you’re not ready now, when are you going to be ready? Think about it. You don’t just say, “I only want to work for Oakland, so I’ll only take their test.” Well, most cities only test once every few years. If you fail that one test, you might have to wait another few years. Instead, if you had been taking every test you could, learning the process, getting better with each test, learning more about yourself, your weaknesses, your strengths, etc., you would then maybe be *MORE READY* for Oakland (or that department you really want to work for).
- You should be getting better with each test you take. There are only a handful of different written tests out there, only a few different physical ability tests out there, and only a handful of different oral board questions. I cringe when I hear people say that they didn’t take a certain test because “they didn’t want to work there.” How do you know you won’t “like a certain department” until you actually work for them? Stopping by the station only gives you a “small glimpse” into their world.
- Testing to be a full-time firefighter is a full-time job in itself. Make it a way of life. The more you put into it now, the quicker you should get your badge! The more education you obtain now, the less you will have to obtain in the future. Getting your two-year or four-year degree NOW, means you will have more time in the future for something else – like taking other classes, or even just enjoying quality time with your family or friends.

Fire Department Web Site of the Month

Alameda County Fire Department - <http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/fire>

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!