

Firefighters

An employment guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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Firefighters NOC 4312

May also be called:

- *Fire Inspector*
- *Fire Captain*
- *Fire Prevention Officer*

1. What Would I Do?

Firefighters respond to fires and other emergencies. You work as part of a team to save people's lives and limit the damage done to property.

Your duties include:

- respond to fire alarms and other calls for assistance
- rescue victims from burning buildings and accident sites
- control and extinguish fires
- provide emergency paramedical aid to accident victims or ill persons
- maintain firefighting equipment
- educate the public on fire prevention
- may conduct building inspections to ensure compliance with fire code
- prepare written reports on fire incidents

More information:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Firefighters**

<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4312>

2. Am I Suited For This Job?

Firefighters must be:

- strong and physically fit
- mentally alert
- calm and level headed
- able to deal with emotional stress
- good communicators
- able to work well as part of a team
- able to follow strict safety procedures

In large urban centres, firefighters typically work shifts with rotating days off. In smaller communities, you may work on a part-time or on-call basis. Firefighters spend much of their time in fire halls or training facilities, preparing to handle a variety of emergency situations.

You need a high degree of physical fitness and mental alertness, since firefighting is both physically and mentally demanding. The work environment is often dangerous and can include extreme temperatures and smoke. You must also be able to handle the emotional stress of the job.

Employment in this occupation is competitive and even getting selected to train for this career can be challenging. As an applicant, you need to show that you have physical and mental strength and stamina.

Sources:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Firefighter**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4312>
- **Career Cruising** database (Profile for 'Firefighter').
<http://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

WorkBC reports that the median annual salary for Firefighters in British Columbia is approximately \$85,030.

In BC's regions, you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Wages (\$/hour)		
	Low	Median	High
British Columbia	27.47	41.01	50.00
Cariboo Region	30.00	42.00	52.45
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	26.50	40.00	52.00
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	30.00	38.00	52.08

Table from Job Bank Canada Wage Report <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/search-wages>

In addition to their salaries, full-time firefighters usually receive benefits, such as dental care and paid vacation and sick days

Source: WorkBC

4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

There is currently a great deal of competition for available job openings for firefighters. However, it is expected that a large number of retirements in the coming years will create new employment opportunities.

Most fire departments are trying to increase the diversity of the force, including the number of visible minority and female candidates.

Most jobs are available in regions with larger populations including: Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, the Okanagan, Kamloops, Prince George and the Kootenay region.

Employment Outlook in BC, 2019-2029



Chart from WorkBC

Source: WorkBC

5. How do I become a Firefighter?

Firefighters usually require:

- completion of high school
- completion of one or two years of additional post-secondary education
- two years of work experience after the completion of high school
- successful completion the National Fire Protection Association 1001 Level 1 and Level 2 Certification
- valid Class 3 Driver's License
- BC Emergency Medical Assistance Licensing Board License
- assessments of vision, hearing and physical fitness

Volunteer fire departments usually provide training, which can eventually lead to basic professional qualifications.

Becoming a fire fighter is a competitive process. You apply to individual cities or municipalities as a potential candidate, and are assessed as part of a recruitment selection process.

Selection criteria differs slightly in each municipality. In general the recruitment process looks at the following: a standard of safe driving history, first aid licencing, vision and hearing tests, criminal history check, general physical fitness, and post-secondary requirements.

While not mandatory, many departments prefer applicants with additional qualifications including previous experience in emergency services, and other practical transferable to areas of firefighting.

For more information see:

- **WorkBC Career Profile for Firefighters**
<https://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4312>
- **Becoming a Fire Fighter, Justice Institute of British Columbia**
<https://www.jibc.ca/programs-courses/schools-departments/school-public-safety/fire-safety-division/becoming-fire-fighter>

6. How Do I Find A Job?

Where would I work?

- *Firefighters are primarily employed by municipal and district fire departments*

You must apply to individual cities or municipalities as a potential candidate, and are selected as part of a recruitment process.

BC Fire Departments:

- **Vancouver Fire Rescue Services**
<https://vancouver.ca/your-government/join-fire-and-rescue-services.aspx>
- **Surrey Fire Service**
<https://www.surrey.ca/city-services/4696.aspx>
- **Richmond Fire-Rescue**
<https://www.richmond.ca/safety/firerescue/careers.htm?PageMode=HTML>
- **North Shore Tri-Municipal Fire Recruitment**
<https://northshorefirerecruiting.ca/>
- **New Westminister Fire & Rescue Services**
<https://www.newwestcity.ca/services/public-safety/fire-and-rescue-services/recruitment>
- **Coquitlam Fire & Rescue**
<https://www.coquitlam.ca/public-safety/fire-and-rescue/firefighter-requirements>
- **BC Fire Department Listings, Office of the Fire Commissioner of BC**
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/fire-safety>

Find the listings under "Quick Links"; provides a list of all fire departments throughout the province

Networking, Volunteering and Temporary Agencies

Networking or working as a volunteer are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

Networking and the Hidden Job Market:

When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.

Volunteer opportunities

- **Volunteer BC**

<https://www.volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

- **GoVolunteer.ca**

<https://www.govolunteer.ca/>

- **Volunteer Firefighters Association of BC**

<http://www.firebc.org/membership/active-fire-halls>

- **BC Search and Rescue**

<https://www.bcsara.com/sar-groups/volunteering>

- **Canadian Red Cross**

<https://www.redcross.ca/volunteer>

disaster management volunteers for relief and recovery assistance

- **St. John Ambulance**

<https://www.sja.ca/English/How-You-Can-Help/Pages/Volunteer/How-to-Volunteer.aspx>

For additional tips see:

- **Networking for Employment**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Networking for Employment]

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Getting Canadian Work Experience]

7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience. Use the library catalogue, <http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

For more information see:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

Go to <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca>

[Search Writing Resumes and Cover Letters]

8. Where Can This Job Lead?

Progression to senior positions, such as investigator, training officer, captain, deputy fire chief or fire chief, is possible with additional training and several years of experience.

If you have the appropriate experience and abilities you may specialize in hazardous materials, technical rescue or other areas.

You may also advance to positions such as training officers, public safety educators, fire safety inspectors or fire investigators.

Source: WorkBC

9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **British Columbia Professional Firefighters Association**
<https://www.bcpffa.net/>
- **Fire Prevention Officers' Association of British Columbia**
<http://www.fpoa.bc.ca/>
- **Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association**
<https://cvfsa.ca/>
- **Volunteer Firefighters' Association of BC**
www.firebc.org
- **Office of the Fire Commissioner of BC**
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/fire-safety>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>.