

ANSWER THE CALL: A Guide to Volunteer Firefighting

Making Firefighting Part of Your Life.



Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide individuals with information on what it takes to be a volunteer firefighter, in terms of opportunities, expectations and available resources.

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1. Canada's Volunteer Firefighters

Being a volunteer firefighter in one of Canada's fire departments isn't something you do; it's something you are. If you have a desire to contribute to keep your community safe, you should consider being a volunteer firefighter.

We need women and men who are willing to respond and protect from fire and mitigate emergencies in their community, and those who can assist with community education, fundraising and administration.

To help you consider this amazing challenge, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs in collaboration with the provincial and territorial chief associations and the Canadian Volunteer Fire Service Association have developed this information kit. It will give you a sense of what volunteer firefighting in Canada entails.

If after reading this document, you feel you'd like to explore further, please contact your local volunteer fire department for more detail on how to meet your department's needs and expectations.



2. Basic Requirements*

Please note that requirements may vary by province and territory.

Volunteer firefighters train for emergency response when citizens in your communities call. The call may come anytime 24 hours a day, and in almost every situation, under emergency and stressful circumstances. It is the ultimate community service for those who need them.

Despite this, our volunteer firefighters tell us about the tremendous rewards that come with their work. We know there are others with the same courage, commitment and compassion.

Do you have what it takes?





For all volunteer positions:

- A Valid Driver's License (minimum)
- Minimum 18 years of age
- Depending on the community, able to understand and communicate in English and/or French (written and oral)
- Physically able to perform tasks and duties of the job
- Able to commit scheduled time to training
- Live and/or work in the response area
- Be of sound and positive ethics and thrive in a team environment
- No conviction of a criminal offense related to the job duties of a firefighter



3. Responsibilities

For fire and emergency response volunteer firefighter positions, the duties include:

- Work as part of an organized, trained team to respond to emergency situations
- Safely protect citizens in times of crisis
- Perform the duties as trained for first responder, fire suppression and public education as assigned
- Responding to a broad range of emergency situations as trained
- Provide pre-hospital care for victims
- Be a community role model
- Responsible for upgrading and maintaining skills, knowledge and physical requirements
- Maintain the fire station and upkeep of firefighting equipment

Environment:

- Fast paced, team-orientated and inclusive

For administrative/education/fundraising and other volunteer positions:

Other positions may be available in your local fire department if you'd like to contribute your talents through other opportunities.

- Work as part of a team
- Perform the duties of administration, fundraising, public education, or other as assigned
- Basic understanding the role of emergency responder and fire suppression
- Appreciation for public safety and protection of citizens
- Be a community role model
- Responsible for upgrading and maintaining skills and knowledge when required



Did you know?

Did you know that 85% of Canada's Firefighters are volunteer? They play a major role in Canada's Safety.



Our Mission Statement

Connecting Canada's provincial, territorial and allied associations, and external stakeholders for the advancement of public and firefighter safety, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC).





Did you know?

Did you know that there are over 126 thousand Volunteer Firefighters in Canada currently protecting our communities?



Did you know?

Did you know that firefighting is the most trusted profession in Canada?



Did you know?

Did you know that diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce?



4. Here Are Some FAQs

Do I need specific qualifications to become a volunteer firefighter?

Yes. The specifics differ by province and department. You will need to acquire both firefighting skills and attain a certain level of physical fitness that will allow you to do the job. Some departments may also need volunteers with experience in areas like administration, public education and fundraising. See Requirements section on page 2.

How do I get the necessary training?

Training requirements differ by departments, communities and provinces. In many cases, if you are accepted as a volunteer firefighter, the fire department will provide training and will cover most training costs. Other than meeting that minimum requirement, volunteer firefighters are expected to train a certain amount of hours per month with their colleagues. Please note that some departments base their training to the require NFPA 1001 Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications. Please check with your department, as many offer certification paths as well.

Are most volunteers men?

Although many volunteers are men, the Canadian Fire Service is striving to be more demographically representative. Diversity and Inclusion is important and a topic all members of the service take seriously, as they understand it's importance in our communities. Anyone with the courage, commitment and compassion to serve is welcome to take our training and become part of our team.

Can a volunteer position lead to a career in firefighting?

Yes. Volunteering is one of the best ways to get the necessary training and experience to be an attractive candidate for a career firefighting position. Many volunteer firefighters achieve other careers as well, as first responder life skills become great assets to many professions inside and outside of emergency services.

Is being a volunteer firefighter and first responder suited to everyone?

No. It takes more than just a desire to help people and contribute to your community. Being part of the fire and emergency response service means you respond to many crisis situations. The environments are sometimes hazardous. As we are all human, there can be an emotional toll because of the nature of the situations.

But the personal rewards are, as many put it, "beyond description." You literally make a difference between life and death. You also become part of a supportive team that takes care of each other.

There also are other ways to volunteer. Some Local departments need and depend on volunteers for administrative, education and fundraising activities.

Will I be required to fill a minimum number of hours?

Yes. Many departments require a minimum number of volunteer hours per month both in training commitment and emergency response. Ask when you first inquire into typical workload and commitment of your local department.





Do volunteer firefighters get paid?

No. Volunteer firefighters do not get paid, but depending on the department, they may get stipends or be reimbursed for time spent on shifts, responding to calls and training. Volunteer firefighters are also eligible for the federal Volunteer Tax Credit. To claim this tax credit, you need to be a volunteer firefighter during the year and have contributed at least 200 hours of service. You can find more information about the volunteer tax credit here: <https://cafc.ca/page/Voltaxcredit>.

Should I start physical training before applying to volunteer?

Yes, a physical training program helps you achieve the physical requirements that may be required by your department. Good physical fitness is good for all for many reasons outside of the fire service as well.

 **5. Take the Next Step**

We need volunteers like you, driven to serve your community with courage, commitment and compassion.

Have a question that's not answered here? Get in touch with:

