

Pathways to  
**Firefighting Careers**  
with the Oceanside Fire Department



# OCEANSIDE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Oceanside Fire Department prides itself in attracting a diverse, highly-qualified pool of applicants. The current entry-level position for the Oceanside Fire Department is Firefighter/Paramedic. The minimum qualifications for this classification include, but are not limited to, State of California or National Registry Paramedic licensure and the ability to obtain San Diego County accreditation as a paramedic.

For entry-level candidates, the successful completion of an accredited basic fire academy is also required. Additionally, a current CPR and ACLS card is required, along with a valid State of California Class C Driver's License.

There are many paths to the fire service, and this booklet will help you learn about them.

All prospective Oceanside Fire Department employees must undergo a personal background investigation, and a comprehensive medical evaluation, including a drug screen.

Fire Department recruiting, testing and hiring of employees is handled by the City of Oceanside Human Resources Department. For information, contact Human Resources (HR) at (760) 435-3500. For information on current job openings see the [Current City of Oceanside Job Openings](#), or call the City's Job Hotline number at (760) 435-3505. You may also sign up for Fire Department job alerts through the HR webpage.

## What does a Career as an Oceanside Firefighter Entail?

Firefighters receive expert training that prepares them to handle a variety of emergency situations. Though fighting fires are what they are best known for, firefighters also handle medical emergencies, rescuing and treating the injured, educating the public, and more. Their work often requires them to be on call at all hours.

A Firefighter must have good judgment, good communication skills, demonstrate mechanical aptitude, basic math skills, and ability to understand and learn firefighting material. In addition, a Firefighter must be able to face hazardous, life threatening situations, and have coping skills for managing unpleasant and difficult situations.

Firefighters must have great interpersonal skills and be able to work well under stressful situations. At the same time, they must be team players, able to get along with a variety of people in close quarters. The ability to follow orders and work in an organization is important. Firefighting is physically demanding and personnel in the fire service must be in excellent physical condition.

Becoming a Firefighter often takes a great deal of long-term preparation, self-motivation, and commitment. While there is no guarantee that any of these activities will result in your selection as an entry-level Firefighter, experience has shown that taking the steps outlined in the following pages has tended to distinguish outstanding candidates, and documents an applicant's interest in the position. The Oceanside Fire Department has various fire prevention and support-level positions as well.

## Steps to Becoming an Oceanside Firefighter

What does it take to work in a firehouse? Firefighters work long hours under stressful conditions. They are typically more physically fit than people in professions other than law enforcement or athletics. There are some steps you can take while still in High School! Get in shape. You'll be required to pass a strenuous physical examination at the time you apply for work as a firefighter. Take a CPR class. It's a great time to clean up any academic deficiencies if they might hamper your efforts to attend firefighting training or fire academy. If there is an item in your personal background that requires clearing, now's the time. There is no set universal firefighter career path, but these are the steps aspiring firefighters tend to follow.

**1. Learn as much as you can about the fire service and get hands-on experience** - Fire Service is a career that we hope you will be passionate about. Take the time to learn all you can, meet and talk to Firefighters, and subscribe to fire service news, such as [FireRescue1.com](http://FireRescue1.com).

It is common for fire departments to ask you such questions as, "Where is the fire service going to be in five years?" or "What are the three biggest issues facing the fire service today?" Having your thumb on the pulse of the fire service profession will help you to stand out from your competition and prepare you for the career.

Unlike many other careers, the educational course and pathway into the fire service is varied. It is going to be up to you to educate yourself and seek out the opportunities that are available. You must be aggressively pro-active in your quest for knowledge and information.

You should be willing to seek out opportunities to gain hands-on experience to compliment your education. There are great classes and training opportunities available. Your Oceanside Firefighters are a great resource. Other resources include the fire science instructors at your local community college.

By completing the pathways outlined below, you will not be guaranteed a career in the fire service. However, your odds will increase greatly and you will be making yourself more marketable, more informed, and the best overall candidate you can be.

## 2. If you're an Oceanside High School student:

**Join the Health Academy Program!** Oceanside High School Health Academy is a three-year program which begins in tenth grade. Enrollment requires an application and an interview. Students conduct the interview, and acceptance is based on goals, ambition and sincerity. From 10-12th grade, students are scheduled together in three academic classes and one career technical class.

### Health Academy Classes include:

**The First Responder Class for Seniors** - Oceanside firefighters teach the First Responder class every Thursday and Oceanside Lifeguards teach every Tuesday. The curriculum is based on the First Responder curriculum of the American Heart Association. Students are certified in CPR with AED. The class is articulated with Palomar College and students receive 3 credits if they meet the requirements.

You will participate in Disaster Drills, Physical Conditioning Days and HIPAA training.

Students receive a tour and information at the Oceanside Lifeguard headquarters, and hear about career opportunities first-hand from full-time lifeguards.

Students receive a Fire Station tour and learn more first-hand from the Oceanside Fire Department.





Students perform an Agility Day assessment at Fire Station 7, located on Mission Avenue. A series of equipment and obstacles are set up for you to complete. Students wear turnout coats, breathing apparatus, hard hats and gloves.

Students also participate in 2 ride-alongs with the Oceanside Fire Department.

Many female students have from the Health Academy have gone on to attend Camp Blaze, a firefighter camp for women only, in the state of Washington. More information: [www.campblaze.com](http://www.campblaze.com).

Students in the Health Academy will be eligible for valuable internships and job-shadowing opportunities and receive instruction in college and career search, resumes and interviews.

### 3. Participate in Teen CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)

Teen CERT is open to Health Academy and Academy of Justice students only. CERT training teaches you readiness and response skills. Hands-on practice and realistic exercises prepare you for the unexpected in our community. New leadership skills empower you to safely respond to an emergency and assist victims without endangering yourself or others. These skills will last a lifetime.

The training consists of nine units; each unit has goals and learning objectives. The units teach you to keep yourself safe while helping others; to identify and anticipate hazards; reduce fire hazards in the home and workplace; use fire extinguishers to put out small fires; assist emergency responders; conduct light search and rescue; set up medical treatment areas; apply basic first aid techniques and help reduce survivor stress. At the end of the course, you'll participate in a disaster drill to reinforce the skills you learn in the training.

The training is a great opportunity to meet new people. You'll get to know others as you practice vital teamwork skills. Once your friends see what you're learning, they may want to join as well.



For more information on Teen CERT, please contact **Kim Roy** (760-901-8200 x8278) or **Chandra Faist** (760-901-8200 x8276) or email the **Oceanside CERT** program at [Oceanside.CERT@gmail.com](mailto:Oceanside.CERT@gmail.com).

## 4. Get the Basic Requirements

Firefighters must have a high school diploma or equivalent and hold a valid driver's license. You must be physically fit and are required to pass a criminal background check and drug screening as well. Take a CPR class as a first step! Schedule another ride-along with the Oceanside Fire Department (call 760-435-4100). Volunteer to work in the Oceanside Fire Department Administrative Offices (Volunteer application [here](#)).

## 5. Start your Resume

Get a resume started and include service projects, any awards, and athletics. Did you have a leadership role? Include any and all pertinent information and add to it as you progress. Students in the Oceanside High School Health Academy learn to create cover letters, resumes and practice interviews. When opportunities arise, you'll be ready to go!

## 6. Become an EMT/Paramedic

Having an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) **and** Paramedic license is a requirement for Oceanside Firefighters, who are often called out for emergency medical situations. An EMT is a trained individual who provides basic life support at the scene of a medical emergency to prevent further injury after the initial incident. The basic EMT course requires a minimum 120 hours of classroom time, plus an additional 10 to 24 hours of ride-along and/or observation. EMT skills include but are not limited to patient assessment, airway management, bleeding control, splinting, burn and wound care, CPR, patient extrication/movement, emergency childbirth, administration of oxygen, glucose, and the use of auto-injectors for allergic reaction, as well as variety of other skills. EMTs often work as ambulance drivers/attendants, hospital emergency room technicians, and as firefighters where being a paramedic is not required. Over 80% of all calls for service in Oceanside are for medical aid and not fires.

Paramedics provide advance life support skills. These include more in-depth patient assessments, electrocardiogram (ECG) monitoring and assessment, establishment of intravenous therapies, administration of drugs, cardioversion/defibrillation, more complex patient extrication and movement, communication with medical control via radio, in addition to all the skills of the EMT. Paramedic training may be 1,200 to 1,800 hours depending on the training institution. A comprehensive field internship is also required. Not all paramedics become firefighters. There are emergency medical systems which use non fire based paramedics.

The City of Oceanside maintains a fire based paramedic system and all firefighters must maintain their paramedic license throughout their career.

**To become an EMT/Paramedic, please visit:**

[PALOMAR COLLEGE EMT/PARAMEDIC COURSES](#)

**For more information contact:**

Mary J. Reed, Academic Department Assistant  
mreed@palomar.edu  
Palomar College, Escondido Education Center  
Emergency Medical Education Department  
(760) 744-1150 EXT 8150 (760) 432-0353 (fax)

[FINANCIAL AID](#)

[MIRAMAR COLLEGE EMT COURSES](#)

For more information contact EME:  
Mary Kjartanson – EMT Program Director  
[mkjartan@sdccd.edu](mailto:mkjartan@sdccd.edu)

[FINANCIAL AID](#)

## **7. Work as an EMT/Paramedic for at least One Year before Applying with the Oceanside Fire Department**

While not a requirement, the more experience you can have as an EMT/Paramedic the more likely you will be successful during your probationary period as an Oceanside Firefighter/Paramedic. Some possible places to work as and EMT/Paramedic include a hospital emergency department; Tri-City Medical Center for example. A private emergency medical service such as AMR/Rural Metro, or another fire agency that may be less restrictive in its hiring practice. It is not uncommon for firefighters starting their career to work for one agency and when the opportunity arises to test for the agency that they want to spend the remainder of their career.

Develop a resume to include all fire service related information so it is easily available when the application period opens. Develop your interview skills. Ask firefighters you may know to set up mock oral boards so that you know what the experience feels like. Look for opportunities with agencies that have reserve or volunteer firefighter positions.

## 8. Attend a Fire Academy after High School

A fire academy is a place where the prospective firefighter learns all the basic skills of the job. The recruit firefighter is physically conditioned, held to high disciplinary standards, and provided a broad education on the technical and academic challenges of the profession. Academy training can last anywhere from 10 to 18 weeks depending on the curriculum being taught. Completing a fire academy will not guarantee a job but you will know that you have the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform as a firefighter.

### [Palomar College Fire Academy](#)

For information, please contact Carole Musgrove, Fire Technology Staff Assistant at (760) 744-1150 x1704, or [cmusgrove@palomar.edu](mailto:cmusgrove@palomar.edu).

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### [San Diego Miramar College Fire Technology & EMT](#)

For information, contact Isabella Fedman at [ifeldman@sdccd.edu](mailto:ifeldman@sdccd.edu) or 619-388-7375.

### [FINANCIAL AID](#)

## 9. The Testing Process

The Testing Process includes a written test, a physical agility test, an oral board, EMS/Paramedic testing and a Chief's interview. The Oceanside Public Library has an online database called [Learning Express](#) that has practice exams. You must set up a Learning Express account to login. They also have hard copy firefighter exam preparation books. Visit the Oceanside Public Library today to get started.

### [REGIONAL TESTING](#)

It's a good idea to start preparing for a test now, as it's a competitive career. Check out the practice tests available at the Oceanside Public Library (link above).

It took a while, but you just found the ways to become an Oceanside firefighter. You've taken a big step, good work!



# Resources

[Oceanside Fire Department](#)

<http://www.firefightermedic.com/>

[National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#)

[International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services](#)

[International Association of Fire Fighters](#)

[U.S. Fire Administration](#)

[National Fire Academy](#)

[National Fire Protection Association](#)

[Firefighters Bookstore](#)

[Oceanside Library Resources and Mock Tests](#)



The Oceanside Fire Department also offers positions in addition to that of Firefighters. There are periodic opportunities for Paramedics, Lifeguards, Fire Safety Specialists, Investigators, Fire Plans Examiners, Couriers and Support Staff. For more information, please contact the Oceanside Fire Department at 760-435-4100.