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# ***Firefighter Exam*** FOR **DUMMIES®**

**by Stacy L. Bell, Tracey Vasil Biscontini,  
and Lindsay Rock**



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Lindsay currently resides in Exeter, Pennsylvania. She spends much of her free time continuing to prove that she can keep up with the boys. If she's not riding her bright yellow quad through the woods, you may find her on the golf course or watching Penn State and Pittsburgh Steelers football.



## ***Dedication***

To the men and women of the fire service — who put their lives on the line every day.

## ***Authors' Acknowledgments***

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# Introduction

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Chances are that if you're reading this book, you've thought about pursuing a career in the fire service. Good for you! Firefighting is an exhilarating career. Sure, it involves some risk, but for the most part, firefighters consider what they do honorable, rewarding, and essential for public safety. Firefighters rescue people from all manner of emergencies, including wildland fires, structure fires, floods, motor vehicle accidents, and more. They work to keep the public safe from harm.

Perhaps you want to become a firefighter because you like the thought of helping people each day. Maybe you like the idea of an ever-changing work environment or you want a job that keeps you active all the time. Whatever your reason, we applaud your choice and want to help you get hired.

The firefighter hiring process is unlike that of any other job. It's much more than a job application, a resume, and an interview. It involves numerous tests and evaluations designed to ensure that you're ready to begin training to become a firefighter. No need to worry. We wrote *Firefighter Exam For Dummies* for people just like you. Consider us the tour guides on your career path; we'll lead you from application to academy.

## About This Book

The firefighter hiring process has many elements, including a number of exams, interviews, and evaluations, each pushing you one step closer to proving that you have what it takes to begin firefighter training. *Firefighter Exam For Dummies* guides you through every step of the process with detailed descriptions and information.

This book begins with a general overview of what firefighters do and then moves on to the specifics of the exam process, including detailed chapters on each element of the written exam, the physical ability test, the oral interview, the medical exam, and the psychological evaluation. We provide four full-length practice tests to help you prepare for the written exam, as well as tips for interviewing and staying in shape.

Although this book is likely to catch the attention of career firefighter hopefuls, volunteers may benefit from the information, tips, and advice within its pages, too. Volunteers often have to undergo the same training as paid firefighters, and with the number of volunteer departments transitioning into paid fire companies on the rise, employment testing may change from "option" to "requirement." We're certain that if this occurs, *Firefighter Exam For Dummies* can help.

## Conventions Used in This Book

The following conventions are used throughout the text to make things consistent and easy to understand:

- ✓ We use the term *applicant* to refer to a person who applies for a firefighting job by signing up to take the written exam. We use the term *candidate* to refer to a person who has been screened as qualified and invited to participate in the recruitment process.
- ✓ All Web addresses appear in `monofont`.

- ✓ New terms appear in *italics* and are closely followed by easy-to-understand definitions.
- ✓ **Bold** is used to highlight keywords in bulleted lists and the action parts of numbered steps.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

Everyone knows what happens when you assume, but while writing this book, we decided to live dangerously and make the following assumptions about you:

- ✓ You're interested in becoming a firefighter, and you want to know more about the job and the hiring process.
- ✓ You want to take some firefighter practice tests so you know what to expect and where to focus your studying.
- ✓ You want to prepare yourself for each step of the firefighter hiring process to help ensure your chances of overall success.
- ✓ You understand that successfully completing all exams, interviews, and evaluations means that you qualify to *begin* training to become a firefighter. You know that actually rushing into burning buildings doesn't occur until after you've received extensive training at an academy or some other training program.
- ✓ You can read, speak, and understand the English language reasonably well. (Writers of firefighter exams assume this, too.) If you need to brush up on your vocabulary and grammar skills, you may want to review Chapter 5.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

This book is divided into five parts and 24 chapters. The table of contents outlines the specifics, but the following is an overview of what you can expect to see.

### *Part I: So You Want to Be a Firefighter? Get Ready!*

If you're curious to know exactly what firefighters do and where they work, or if you'd like to know more about the various exams you have to take to begin training to become a firefighter, turn to Part I. Chapter 1 explains a firefighter's typical duties and career path, and Chapters 2 and 3 describe the screening process and the exams.

### *Part II: Gearing Up to Take the Test: The Written Exam*

If the written exam makes you a bit nervous, turn to Part II, where you find details about and practice questions for the various subject areas typically found on written firefighter exams.

## ***Part III: Demonstrating Physical, Mental, and Emotional Fitness with Interactive Tests***

If the physical ability test, oral interview, medical exam, or psychological evaluation has you stressed, open to Part III. Chapter 12 describes the elements of a physical ability test, Chapter 13 explains what to expect in the oral interview, and Chapter 14 presents an overview of the medical exam and psychological evaluation.

## ***Part IV: Practice Firefighter Exams***

Want to try your hand at taking a written firefighter exam? Part IV includes four practice exams, including two general exams, an exam based on the National Firefighter Selection Inventory test, and an exam based on the New York City Fire Department's written exam.

## ***Part V: The Part of Tens***

The Part of Tens is a standard element of *For Dummies* books. Chapter 23 contains some helpful tips for succeeding on the various firefighter exams. Chapter 24 describes some things every firefighter (or future firefighter) should do.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***



To make this book easier to read and simpler to use, we include some icons that can help you find key ideas and information. Keep an eye out for them.

The Example icon draws your attention to sample questions and answers that help you understand the concept we're explaining.



This icon appears next to information that could benefit you during the various steps of the hiring process. This information can save you time and effort.



When you see this icon, you know the information that follows is especially important to the various firefighter exams.



This icon highlights information that could pose a threat to your success on the firefighter exams.

## *Where to Go from Here*

The great thing about *For Dummies* books is that you can start wherever you want and still find complete information. Want to know how you'd perform on a written firefighter exam without any preparation? Open up to Chapter 15 and take a practice test. Then check your answers in Chapter 16 to see how well you did. Interested in what happens after you've passed the written test? Go to Chapters 12 to 14 to get the skinny on the non-written exams such as the oral interview and the physical ability test. The point is that you don't have to read this book from cover to cover. You can start wherever you think you need the most work.

If you're not sure where to start, we suggest Part I, which explains what firefighters do and where they work, along with a detailed description of the hiring process and an overview of the different exams.

# Part I

## So You Want to Be a Firefighter? Get Ready!

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Are you sure firefighting is the right career choice for you?"

## *In this part . . .*

**H**as it been your lifelong dream to jump into a shiny, red fire engine with screaming sirens and flashing lights and race to someone's rescue? Do you want to make your dream a reality? First things first. Before you can leap into that fire engine, check out the process for becoming a firefighter.

We know you're eager to get started, but take a few minutes to read Part I. This part provides information about careers in the fire service, the firefighter hiring process, and the various pre-employment firefighter exams. The more you know about the hiring process and the exams, the more prepared you'll be for each stage down the road.

## Chapter 1

# Getting the Lowdown on the Job of Firefighter

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding firefighters' duties and work environment
  - ▶ Realizing the risks associated with firefighting
  - ▶ Identifying the levels of fire departments' occupational hierarchy
  - ▶ Pinpointing where to find firefighting jobs
  - ▶ Looking ahead at the occupational outlook for firefighters
- 

**W**hy does a career in firefighting appeal to you? Do you enjoy the physical demands of the job? Do you cherish the opportunity to save a life? Do you like the feeling that your job gives something back to the community? Many career firefighters believe that they didn't choose the job — the job chose them. Perhaps you've experienced a similar calling, or maybe you're inspired by the good work you've seen other firefighters do. Regardless, before you become a firefighter, you need to understand exactly what the job entails.

In this chapter, we give you information about careers in firefighting, such as salaries, employment outlooks, work environments, ranks within fire organizations, and risks associated with the job. Although firefighter exams won't likely test your knowledge of this information, it's still important to know what you're likely to encounter if you plan to make firefighting your career.

## *Understanding What It's Like to Be a Firefighter*

Firefighting has certainly changed from the early days of bucket brigades and horse-drawn fire trucks. Today's firefighters must be prepared to not only fight fires but also respond to crises ranging from traffic accidents and medical emergencies to natural disasters, water rescues, and sadly, even terrorist attacks. Before entering a career in the fire service, it's important that you understand what firefighters do and where they work, as well as the risks associated with the job.

## *Knowing your role*

Movies and television would have you believe that you'll spend most of your time tracking down serial arsonists or racing out of a burning building, an unconscious victim draped over each shoulder, just as the structure behind you explodes into a huge fireball. Although such scenarios do happen on occasion, you'll more often respond to rush-hour fender benders and activated fire alarms caused by overcooked pot roast. The following sections cover some of the roles you may play, both at the station and away.

### *Responding to emergencies*

As a firefighter, you'll be responsible for a number of duties. Most obvious among those duties is fighting fires, but you'll also respond to a variety of other emergencies, from minor nuisances such as a fallen tree blocking a roadway to major incidents such as gas leaks, traffic accidents, vehicle rollovers, plane crashes, building collapses, and floods.

When disasters occur, firefighters often are the first responders. As a result, many departments require firefighters to be trained as emergency medical technicians (EMTs) so they can provide first aid and perform other life-saving medical procedures on victims. Most departments require only the most basic EMT certification (EMT-Basic), but many are moving toward requiring more advanced training (EMT-Intermediate or EMT-Paramedic).

As a firefighter EMT, you'll likely be the first person to encounter victims experiencing medical emergencies such as heart attacks, strokes, burns, broken bones, shock, blocked airways, bleeding, and more. Firefighting is *not* for the squeamish or the faint of heart. When you respond to an emergency, you never know what you might find when you arrive. Our best advice is to be prepared for anything and everything.

Other responsibilities include rescues, not only from burning buildings but also from hard-to-reach places, such as lakes or rivers or even steep cliffs. You may have to help clean up hazardous materials. For example, when a truck hauling oil overturns on a highway, fire departments are often called to block roadways, prevent fire, clean up the oil, assist injured victims, and more. During floods, you may have to notify people to evacuate their homes or help them pump water from their homes after flood waters begin to recede.

Firefighters often work in conjunction with other emergency services, including police departments, other fire departments (for example, a state- or county-run wildland firefighting team), and paramedics and ambulance personnel. When working with other emergency services, you'll follow the direction of your superiors, who are responsible for coordinating with other units.

### *Working back at the station and in the community*

Here are some of the tasks firefighters fulfill when they're not on an emergency call:

- ✔ **Household chores:** Firefighters in many departments, especially small or rural departments, have a lot of downtime between calls, which they spend at the station. There, you'll take care of everyday tasks such as laundry (firefighting's a dirty job), cooking (shifts are long; you'll need food keep your motor running), and cleaning (treat the station like your home away from home).
- ✔ **Training and preparation:** As a new firefighter, training and preparation will make up most of your job. After you've gotten a few years of service under your belt, you'll likely use downtime to review new skills, read fire science literature, study for upcoming tests, run practice drills, prepare written reports, work out, and assist new firefighters with their training.
- ✔ **Equipment maintenance:** You may be asked to assist in performing maintenance on fire apparatuses — that is, firefighting vehicles such as fire engines, ladder trucks, and tenders (sometimes called tankers, depending on the region in which you live) — or to clean and maintain other equipment. For example, you may have to refill empty air cylinders, which provide the air you breathe in your self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), or you may have to wash lengths of hose and hang them to dry.
- ✔ **Fire inspection:** Firefighters specially trained as fire prevention inspectors may take time to enter structures and assess sprinkler systems, extinguishers, exits, and fire escapes to make sure they comply with fire codes. Those trained as fire investigators may revisit a fire scene to determine the fire's cause.
- ✔ **Other programs:** Some firefighters may be responsible for activities related to public relations — how the public views the fire department and its role in the community — such as public speaking engagements and creating and teaching fire prevention programs for schools.



## *Looking at shifts: Timing is everything*

Firefighting is a time-consuming occupation. Fire departments are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and firefighters must be ready to respond to an emergency at a moment's notice. This doesn't mean that you have to strike family vacations from the calendar forever; however, it does mean that you should expect to work rotating shifts (a combination of day and night shifts), put in overtime hours, and give up some holidays here and there.

A typical shift for a firefighter may be 24 hours on the clock followed by 48 hours off the clock. Another department may require you to work three 10-hour days, followed by three 10-hour nights, followed by three days off. Shifts largely depend on the size and location of your department. Another thought to keep in mind: When emergencies occur, "quittin' time" goes out the window. You'll be expected to work until the job is done.

## *Picturing your work environment*

As a firefighter, your work environment will generally alternate between the fire station and emergency scenes. The fire station is a relatively static work environment, but emergency scenes constantly change and evolve.

### *On a call*

Firefighters respond to all types of emergency calls. The following are just a few:

- ✓ Structure fires
- ✓ Wildland (forest) fires
- ✓ Gas leaks
- ✓ Traffic accidents
- ✓ Vehicle rollovers
- ✓ Plane crashes
- ✓ Building collapses
- ✓ Fallen trees and natural disasters

Because emergency scenes vary so much — the weather alone can vary from hot, humid, and sunny to freezing, cloudy, and icy — it's impossible to know exactly what your working environment will be like at each call. One day you may find yourself knee deep in floodwater. The next day you may respond to a car accident on a busy interstate highway. Another day you could be trekking through a forest.

Emergencies occur anywhere and anytime, but certain types of emergency scenes generally have the same type of environment. For example, at traffic accidents, you'll likely be surrounded by moving traffic, so you always have to stay alert. During floods, your environment will likely include deep water, washed-out roadways, thick mud, and slippery surfaces. Emergency scenes involving structure fires could involve extremely high temperatures, thick smoke, and falling debris. Our best advice is to stay alert.

### *At the station*

One part of your working environment that shouldn't change too much is the fire station. As a firefighter, you won't always be responding to calls and fighting fires. Depending on the size of your department and the area in which you live, you'll probably spend much of your time at the station, preparing for the next emergency situation.

Fire station components and layouts vary greatly from one department to the next. Departments in large metropolitan areas have to accommodate more firefighters and are likely much larger than municipal departments in smaller communities. Certain areas are essential to all fire stations, however, and the following is a list of facilities that you may encounter in a fire station:

- ✓ **Apparatus room/garage/workshop/storage area:** This room often serves as a combination garage and tool shed. You'll find fire engines, brush trucks, tanker trucks, and ladder trucks parked here. You'll also likely find a variety of tools and equipment.
- ✓ **Conference room/classroom:** This room is likely equipped with either a large conference table and chairs or several smaller desks. Here, you'll undergo training or take part in meetings with fellow firefighters.
- ✓ **Dormitory area:** The dormitory area is where firefighters try to catch some z's between calls. It's usually equipped with beds or cots so firefighters have a place to rest.
- ✓ **Exercise facility/gym:** This room contains exercise equipment, such as a weight bench, free weights, and a treadmill. Here, you can work out and maintain your physical fitness.
- ✓ **Kitchen/dining area:** Because firefighters are often on duty for extended shifts of 10 to 24 hours, they need a place to cook and eat meals. Often the whole crew will gather for meals in the kitchen/dining area at the same time.
- ✓ **Laundry facility:** Firefighting is a dirty job. Firefighters crawl on their knees through soot and other debris. They encounter liquids such as floodwater, oil, natural gas, and blood. In the laundry facility, you can clean your gear and make sure it's ready for the next call.
- ✓ **Lounge:** Many stations have a lounge area where firefighters can kick back and relax — when they can actually find a minute to do so.
- ✓ **Office:** Most fire stations have an office where the chief or other senior officers create schedules, make phone calls, and fill out paperwork.
- ✓ **Restrooms/shower facilities:** When you return from a call, you'll probably want to get cleaned up. Most stations have a restroom/shower facility or a locker room where you can shower and change clothes.

## *Considering risks on the job*

Nearly every call that firefighters face in the line of duty — whether a house fire, car accident, or tanker truck rollover — involves some degree of risk. Firefighters consistently put themselves in risky situations to save people's property and, more important, their lives.

The following are some examples of the risks firefighters face on a regular basis:

- ✓ **Flames:** Obviously firefighters will encounter fire at some point. Fires are unpredictable, and firefighters always run the risk of getting burned.
- ✓ **Smoke and fumes:** Fires produce byproducts including smoke and soot, and burning objects — a plastic chair or the stuffing from a couch cushion, for example — can release noxious fumes. If firefighters aren't properly wearing SCBAs, they may end up inhaling these harmful products of combustion and damaging their lungs.
- ✓ **Hazardous materials (hazmat):** Firefighters may encounter any number of hazardous materials such as poisonous, flammable, or explosive gases; toxic chemicals; medical waste; and radioactive materials. Large trucks often haul these materials on the nation's highways, and when one of them rolls over or gets into an accident, these materials can leak out, creating danger for everyone involved — including the firefighters who help clean up the mess.

- ✓ **Collapsing walls, ceilings, floors, and buildings:** As fire spreads throughout a building, it weakens walls, ceilings, and floors. This puts firefighters at risk because a wall or ceiling could collapse on them or a floor could cave in beneath them, leaving firefighters trapped or injured.
- ✓ **Traffic accidents:** Fire trucks often travel at high speeds to reach fires and other disasters as quickly as possible. Although other cars and trucks are supposed to yield to emergency vehicles, not all do, and this can result in collisions between fire trucks and other automobiles. A high volume of traffic and excessive speeding can also result in accidents.
- ✓ **Long-term health risks:** A leading cause of death among firefighters is heart disease, which can result from high blood pressure, overexertion, and exposure to extreme heat. In addition, firefighters encounter numerous blood-borne pathogens, such as HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C, at emergency scenes. Exposure to certain toxins in the air can lead to an increased risk of developing certain forms of cancer. For example, exposure to asbestos, a material often found in old buildings, may lead to the development of a form of lung cancer called mesothelioma.

As a firefighter, you could encounter any of these hazards — and more — on any given day, and they could result in injury or even death. Our goal in sharing these risks isn't to scare you into forgetting your dream of becoming a firefighter. Rather, we want to adequately prepare you for your future career so you know exactly what to expect — both the risks and the rewards.

## *Handling the highs and lows*

Firefighting can take a toll on your psyche because of all the highs and lows firefighters face. The rewards of firefighting are numerous — making an amazing rescue, saving a family's home, working as a team, bonding with other firefighters. Such scenarios can make you feel like you're on top of the world. But some parts of the job may weigh on your mind and lead to psychological stress. For example, witnessing death and injury, losing co-workers, dealing with guilt after a failed rescue, coping with family issues, and facing angry members of the public can lead to stress.

In the past, many departments used a response approach to help firefighters deal with psychological stress — for example, intervening after a firefighter turned to alcohol or drugs to deal with his or her stress. Today, however, departments have begun to focus on stress management and prevention. Departments may set up education programs or workshops to teach firefighters stress-management techniques and methods for identifying signs of stress. Firefighters and their families may take part in such programs. In addition, fire departments may offer mentoring programs and spiritual guidance or recommend mental health experts to help firefighters deal with the psychological stress of the job.

## *From Firefighter to Fire Chief: Climbing the Fire Department Ladder*

As a firefighter, you'll work with all kinds of ladders: wall ladders, roof ladders, extension ladders, and so on. One more ladder you may want to consider is the occupational ladder. A fire department's occupational ladder has many rungs. If you plan to make firefighting your career — which we assume you do, because you're reading this book — chances are that you'll want to start climbing that ladder someday.

In addition to the department positions we list in the following sections (which represent just one of the many rank structures used by fire departments throughout the country), other jobs within the firefighting industry include fire apparatus driver/operators, communications personnel, fire police personnel, airport firefighters, hazardous materials technicians, fire and arson investigators, and public fire and life safety educators.

## *Starting on the bottom rung*

The saying goes, “The only job where you can start at the top is digging a hole.” In firefighting, you’ll have to start on the bottom rung of the career ladder. That means beginning your career as a recruit or probationary firefighter fresh out of a training academy and ready for some real, on-the-job training and, over time, working through the ranks to become a fire chief.

### ***Firefighter***

Firefighters respond to medical emergencies and activated fire alarms. They extinguish fires, ventilate buildings, perform salvage and overhaul duties, and remove people from danger. They also perform inspections. A firefighter’s salary may be between \$30,000 and \$55,000 per year.

### ***Engineer***

Engineers may perform standard firefighter duties, but they’re also responsible for training new firefighters and driving and operating heavy-duty fire apparatuses. They may also discuss fire safety regulations with the public. An engineer may earn \$48,000 to \$62,000 each year. (An engineer should not be confused with a fire engineer, also known as a *fire protection engineer* or a *fire safety engineer*, who has a fire engineering degree and would likely work outside the fire department in areas such as fire suppression system design, building design and layout, or risk analysis.)

## *Moving to middle management*

Firefighters and engineers who want to be promoted to middle management often take exams that show their growing knowledge of the field. They may have to demonstrate their knowledge of building construction, equipment management, emergency medical practices, and public speaking.

### ***Fire lieutenant***

A fire lieutenant coordinates the operations of his or her company during emergencies. He or she may be responsible for regular equipment maintenance and developing training standards. The fire lieutenant may also participate in hiring new recruits and creating personnel schedules. The salary for a person in this position is between \$50,000 and \$62,000.

### ***Fire captain***

The fire captain of a department may be responsible for communicating with the public, overseeing the use and maintenance of department equipment, and maintaining personnel records. He or she may also participate in training and employee development. In some departments, captains are responsible for maintaining an individual station and its equipment. A fire captain’s annual salary may range from \$60,000 to \$72,000.

***Battalion chief***

The battalion chief creates a link between an assistant fire chief (see the next section) and a fire captain. He or she may supervise the fire captain in goal-setting and planning, budget preparation, and personnel management. A battalion chief may also create departmental policies. In many departments, battalion chiefs serve as shift commanders, who direct firefighters at emergency scenes. Battalion chiefs earn between \$66,000 and \$81,000.

***Becoming the top dog***

Depending on the department, advancing to positions beyond battalion chief may require a bachelor's degree. If a degree is required, it'll most likely be in the areas of fire science or public administration.

***Assistant/Division chief***

The assistant chief reviews and evaluates department/company personnel. He or she researches and plans community activities and appearances for the department, investigates causes of fires, and inspects buildings for fire hazards. The assistant chief may also assist in developing training programs and maintaining department records. The annual salary for this position is \$65,000 to \$83,000.

***Deputy chief***

The deputy chief's responsibilities are similar to the assistant chief's duties. If both positions exist in a department, the deputy chief may share the assistant chief's tasks. He or she may handle administration, participate in training and hiring, and oversee financial records. The deputy chief may also be responsible for disciplining those who break department rules. The annual salary for this position is \$69,000 to \$88,000.

***Fire chief***

The fire chief commands all emergency scenes through the delegation of responsibilities, priorities, and tasks. He or she makes final decisions regarding budget and personnel issues and may create and maintain safety regulations. A fire chief provides communication between his or her department and other agencies. A fire chief earns between \$78,000 and \$105,000 annually, depending on location, department size, and experience.

## ***Finding Firefighters: Who They Work For***

Where do firefighters work? If you plan to pursue a career in firefighting, you should know where to look for a firefighting job. Firefighters work in both the public sector and the private sector; we discuss both in the following sections.

***In the public sector***

Most paid firefighters work in fire departments in the public sector. Departments in the public sector — as you may have guessed — are responsible for taking care of the general public. Their main goal is to protect families, homes, businesses, and wildland areas.

Firefighters who work in departments in the public sector are usually employed by local governments. These departments may cover regions ranging in size from small towns to

large cities or entire counties. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 91 percent of firefighters work for local governments. In addition, the U.S. Fire Administration estimates that approximately 74 percent of paid career firefighters who work in the public sector protect cities or towns with a population of 25,000 or more people. Therefore, your best chance for becoming a career firefighter is in a large metropolitan area.

A small percentage — less than 9 percent — of paid firefighters in the public sector may work for federal or state governments, such as those who work at airports or for government agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, or the Bureau of Land Management. The remaining paid firefighters work in the private sector.

### *In the private sector*

Some private companies, especially those with a high potential for hazards such as the oil and chemical industries, have their own fire departments that respond to emergencies. These departments employ a small number of paid firefighters known as *industrial firefighters*.

Industrial firefighters receive highly specialized training to deal with emergency situations common to the industry in which they work. For example, firefighters who work for a department in the oil industry are skilled in handling fires, hazardous materials releases, emergency medical responses, and rescues. The goal of private industrial firefighters is to protect companies, factories, products, and employees. Among the many important jobs of industrial firefighters are routine inspections of company facilities to ensure that all precautions are in place to prevent a fire from starting.

## *Predicting the Future: How Many Firefighting Jobs Will There Be?*

You're in luck! According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS), the number of firefighting jobs available in the decade between 2008 and 2018 is expected to grow by 19 percent, which is an increase of about 57,500 jobs. The BLS also expects that the majority of paid firefighting jobs will come from volunteer positions transitioning to paid positions.

Although the outlook for firefighting jobs in the next few years is good, competition for those positions is fierce. The number of applicants for firefighting jobs far surpasses the number of available positions, and the BLS cites several reasons for this:

- ✓ A career in firefighting is both challenging and rewarding.
- ✓ Firefighters usually need only a high school diploma or its equivalent to enter the fire service (although those who have completed additional firefighter education classes or have achieved other certifications may have an edge).
- ✓ Most firefighters have the opportunity to retire and earn a pension after 25 years of service.

Don't let the competition scare you away, though. You've already taken an important first step in preparing for a career in firefighting by picking up this book. In the chapters that follow, we prepare you for each step along the path toward firefighting career success. The key is persistence. Most applicants don't get hired on their first pass through the firefighter hiring process, so don't give up. With preparation and determination, we have no doubt that you'll succeed.