

Firefighters

SOC: 33-2011 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$59,530

Median Salary

344,900

Employment

+3.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Postsecondary

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 20.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■■ Work-Life Balance

7.0/10 - Good work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	8.0/10	Investigative	6.4/10
Artistic	4.0/10	Social	7.8/10
Enterprising	6.6/10	Conventional	6.2/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Compassion, Decision-making skills, Mental preparedness, Physical stamina, Physical strength

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Firefighters are emergency response professionals who protect **lives, property, and communities** by responding to fires, medical emergencies, hazardous incidents, and natural disasters. Beyond extinguishing fires, firefighters provide emergency medical care, conduct rescues, educate the public on fire prevention, and prepare for high-risk situations through constant training. Their work demands physical strength, technical skill, and the ability to make critical decisions under pressure.

This career is well suited for individuals who are service-oriented, physically capable, and motivated by teamwork and public safety.

What Do Firefighters Do?

Firefighters respond to emergencies and perform a wide range of protective and lifesaving duties. Their responsibilities extend beyond emergency calls to preparedness and community safety.

Common responsibilities include:

- Responding to fires, medical emergencies, and rescue calls
- Extinguishing fires using hoses, pumps, and specialized equipment
- Providing emergency medical care and first aid
- Rescuing individuals from burning buildings, vehicles, or hazardous environments
- Operating fire engines, ladders, and emergency vehicles
- Inspecting buildings for fire hazards and code compliance
- Maintaining equipment, tools, and protective gear

Types of Firefighters

Firefighters may specialize based on environment, training, or assignment:

- Structural Firefighters: Respond to fires in homes, businesses, and public buildings.
- Wildland Firefighters: Combat forest, grassland, and brush fires.
- Firefighter-EMTs and Paramedics: Provide advanced medical care during emergencies.
- Airport Firefighters: Handle aircraft-related fires and rescue operations.
- Hazardous Materials Firefighters: Respond to chemical, biological, or fuel incidents.
- Fire Inspectors and Prevention Specialists (related roles): Focus on fire safety and education.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Firefighters combine physical capability with technical knowledge and teamwork.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Training Pathway

Becoming a firefighter requires formal training and certification:

- High School Diploma or Equivalent: Minimum education requirement
- Fire Academy Training: Intensive instruction in firefighting, rescue, and safety
- Emergency Medical Training: EMT or paramedic certification (often required)
- Physical and Written Examinations: Entry testing for fire departments
- On-the-Job Training: Continued skill development after hiring
- Ongoing Certification and Drills: Required to maintain readiness

Where Do Firefighters Work?

Firefighters are employed in a variety of public and specialized settings:

- Municipal and County Fire Departments

- Wildland and Forestry Agencies
- Airport and Industrial Fire Brigades
- Military and Federal Emergency Services
- Volunteer Fire Departments
- Fire Prevention and Training Organizations

Schedules often include long shifts, nights, weekends, and holidays.

How Much Do Firefighters Earn?

Earnings vary by department, location, and certification level:

- Entry-Level Firefighters: Typically earn stable public safety wages
- Firefighters with EMT or Paramedic Certification: Often earn higher pay
- Experienced Firefighters and Officers: May earn more with seniority and rank

Compensation often includes strong benefits, pensions, and overtime opportunities.

Is This Career Difficult?

Firefighting is physically demanding and emotionally challenging. Firefighters face dangerous conditions, irregular schedules, and high-stress situations. The challenge lies in maintaining physical readiness, emotional resilience, and strict safety discipline in unpredictable environments.

Who Should Consider Becoming a Firefighter?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Want to serve and protect your community
- Are physically fit and mentally resilient
- Can stay calm in emergencies
- Enjoy teamwork and structured environments
- Are comfortable with risk and responsibility

How to Prepare Early

- Maintain strong physical fitness and endurance
- Take courses in health, biology, or emergency services
- Gain EMT or first aid certification early
- Volunteer with fire departments or emergency services
- Develop teamwork, discipline, and stress-management skills

Firefighters stand on the front lines of public safety, combining courage, skill, and teamwork to protect lives and communities in moments when it matters most.