

2015

Fire Fighter



Administration Guide



2015 FIRE FIGHTER EXAM ADMINISTRATION GUIDE

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Introduction

The New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC) has prepared this guide for candidates who will participate in the 2015 Fire Fighter Examination. The information in this guide is designed to help candidates better understand the testing process. This guide offers a systematic method to assist candidates in preparing for the examination administration and explains what to expect post-examination. We encourage candidates to review this guide and the New Jersey Fire Fighter Exam (NJFFE) Introductory Guide. The NJFFE Introductory Guide is designed to assist test-takers in preparing for the 2015 Fire Fighter Examination. Only candidates who have applied to take the 2015 Fire Fighter Exam will be able to access the NJFFE Introductory Guide. Once you complete your online application, a confirmation page will be displayed. In that confirmation note, you will be directed to a website and given a “User Name” and “Password,” which will allow you to view I/O Solutions’ NJFFE Introductory Guide, which will follow this guide. Candidates should take advantage of any and all opportunities to prepare for the examination.

The examination will be designed on the basis of information obtained from a job analysis (JA) of the Fire Fighter title. The JA provides a description of the duties performed by incumbents and identifies the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that are required to effectively perform each of these duties.

Please note that no “study group” has been involved in the development or review of CSC examinations, and at no time have any examination materials been provided to such groups. Additionally, the CSC is not responsible for any claims made by “study groups” or the manner that they represent themselves for advertisement purposes.

Why do candidates have to take an examination?

The selection process in New Jersey's Civil Service System is designed to provide all applicants with an equal opportunity to compete for a position. The examination will serve as one objective tool in this process. Test scores will be used to identify qualified candidates and to generate ranked lists of eligibles to be considered for appointment by local appointing authorities (AAs).

How was the examination developed?

A JA was conducted to identify the KSAOs that are essential to perform the job of a Fire Fighter. A JA is the process of critically examining job components in order to provide a functional description of a job. As a part of this JA, information was gathered about the job through interviews, surveys, and/or observations of on-the-job activities of incumbents (permanent employees). Based on this JA, several KSAOs were identified and rated as to their importance for job success. Examination questions will relate to those KSAOs that were determined to be essential.

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What will the examination look like and how will it be scored?

Please refer to the NJFFE Introductory Guide for more information. (Once you submit your online application, you will receive a confirmation page that includes a link to this guide and to the NJFFE Introductory Guide)

Are there preparation strategies for taking the examination?

Please refer to the NJFFE Introductory Guide for more information. (Once you submit your online application, you will receive a confirmation page that includes a link to this guide and to the NJFFE Introductory Guide).

When and where will the examination be held?

The **tentative** timeframe to administer the 2015 Fire Fighter Examination is **October/November 2015**. However, in the event there are difficulties scheduling the examination, the date may change. Applicants should monitor the CSC website (<http://www.state.nj.us/csc/>) and/or the New Jersey Fire Service Status Report website (http://www.state.nj.us/csc/seekers/jobs/safety/firefighters_titles.html or <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/about/news/safety/index.html>) for the most up-to-date information regarding the 2015 Fire Fighter Exam.

Examination Notices will be mailed two to three weeks prior to the test date. The Notice will list the candidate's specific test date and location. Candidates may be scheduled to take the examination at various sites (north, central, or south) throughout the state. Once candidates are notified of their scheduled examination center, directions can be obtained from our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/about/contact/testing/>. Be sure to map out a travel route well in advance of the examination date and plan to arrive at the test center *early*, since no one will be admitted late. Candidates will not be allowed to refer to this guide or the NJFFE Introductory Guide after they arrive at the test center.

With the threat of high-tech cheating on the rise, **possession** of personal communication devices, such as cell phones, BlackBerrys, pagers/beepers, photographic equipment, MP3 players, or other similar electronic communication devices is prohibited at test centers. Candidates who are seen or heard with any of these devices between the time they step foot inside the test center up until they have completely exited the building, **even if powered-off, will be disqualified and dismissed immediately**. The device may also be confiscated to ensure that an attempt was not made to compromise the testing process. In addition, briefcases and other personal items should not be brought inside the test center. The CSC is not responsible for any personal items.

Upon completion of the testing process, candidates must leave the test center so that other candidates (still involved in the testing) will not be distracted by outside conversations. In some cases where the testing of multiple sessions is being conducted, you may be held, as a group, and released when the next group arrives. This is done in order to prevent interaction between those who have been tested and those who have not been tested.

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What will happen on the day of the examination?

On the day of your examination is scheduled, plan to arrive at your designated test center **early**. Due to the nature of the examination administration, **NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED LATE**. Bring the notification of examination card (Notice) that you received in the mail, two sharpened Number 2 pencils, and two forms of identification. One form of identification MUST include your photograph; failure to do so will result in you being excluded from taking the examination. Valid forms of ID include: driver's license, passport, social security card, employee ID, county ID, bank-issued credit card with photo, and government-issued ID. Forms of ID that are NOT accepted include: library card, shopping club card, and retail or department store issued credit cards. If you are not certain if your ID is acceptable, call the CSC before your test date at (609) 292-4144 to find out what is or is not a valid form of ID.

Your Notice may not have an assigned room (a letter found in the bottom right hand corner) for you to report to; therefore, your room assignment will be made at the test center, and staff there will direct you to a test room. Pay attention to any SPECIAL messages that might appear on your notification card.

What should candidates do if they need special assistance or ADA accommodations?

Candidates who require special assistance or ADA accommodations for this exam must check the corresponding box on the "Preferences" tab of their online application, regardless of whether or not they have previously been approved for accommodations with CSC in the past. Candidates who are indicating a need for accommodations for the first time, as well as candidates who have previously been approved for accommodations, will subsequently be contacted with further instructions.

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Can candidates request a make-up examination?

According to the New Jersey Administrative Code 4A: 4-2.9(c), make-up examinations for public safety open competitive and promotional examinations may **ONLY** be authorized for the following reasons:

- Death in the candidate's immediate family, as evidenced by a copy of the death certificate;
- Error by the Civil Service Commission or the appointing authority;
- Catastrophic injury or illness requiring an extended convalescent period, provided the candidate submits a doctor's certification containing a diagnosis and a statement clearly showing that the candidate's physical condition precluded his or her participation in the examination, as well as documentation from the candidate's employer noting the candidate's related leave from work;
- Military leave, which will be handled as stated in N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.9(c);
- Exoneration from pending disciplinary or criminal charges, which will be handled as stated in N.J.A.C. 4A:4-2.9(d).

Make-up requests must be submitted in writing, with supporting documentation, to NJCSC Make-Up Exam Unit, via fax: (609)-984-1064 or mail: P.O. Box 310, Trenton, NJ 08625-0310 within 5 days of receipt of your Notification Card. Emails will not be accepted.

NOTE: All requests for **medical** make-up examinations must be accompanied by the CSC's Medical Authorization for Make-up Examination form (DPF-728), completed by the treating physician. Form DPF-728 can be obtained through our website at:
<http://www.state.nj.us/csc/about/publications/forms/pdf/dpf-728.pdf>

What about security issues?

All candidates will be required to sign a pledge form at the test center stating that they will not discuss the content of the examination with any candidates, individuals, groups, or organizations whose interest in the test process, product, or material could conflict with the objectives of the CSC.

Will candidates get a chance to review their answers or test materials after the exam is held?

To protect the security of this examination, there will be no post-exam review of any test materials.

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If candidates have a complaint, how can they appeal/comment?

Each appeal/comment will be handled appropriately. If a problem occurs during the administration of the examination and causes a candidate to be placed in a position of disadvantage, an administrative appeal **MUST** be filed prior to leaving the test center. Appropriate forms will be provided for these purposes on the day of the examination.

Candidates may file a content appeal if they believe the examination material is not appropriate for the Fire Fighter title or if they believe a test question is faulty. Content appeals must be filed within five (5) days of the candidate's test date.

If a candidate wishes to file an appeal, he should be as specific as possible. Appeals based solely on opinion or rumor will not be addressed. If a candidate disagrees with a question, he should give specific reasons or proof as to why he disagrees.

The CSC will not entertain any **UNSUBSTANTIATED** complaints regarding breaches of security. Investigation and action will be taken only on signed complaints that are fully documented, i.e., the names of individuals who discussed the materials, the names of any witnesses to the discussion, the nature of the discussion, and the date and place where the discussion occurred.

Is there a charge for submitting an appeal/comment?

Candidates should be aware that as of July 1, 2010, all appeals are subject to a \$20 processing fee, paid by check or money order to CSC. Persons receiving public assistance, or who have veteran status, are exempt from this fee. Comments are free of charge.

What happens if the examination is postponed?

If circumstances force postponement of the examination, or in the case of inclement weather, the CSC will post a scrolling message to the top of the CSC website: <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/>. Candidates may also call the CSC directly at (609) 292-4144 and listen to the pre-recorded message to find out the status of the examination. The CSC may also notify local radio stations as soon as that decision has been made, so you may also listen to local radio stations for examination postponement information.

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Other Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How often does the CSC hold tests for Fire Fighters?

Fire Fighter testing is conducted every two to four years. The Fire Fighter lists that were issued on December 12, 2011 were extended in December 2013, and then again in December 2014, and will remain active until December 2015. The new Fire Fighter announcement was released on July 1, 2015 and will be open through August 31, 2015.

When will the new test be held?

The written test is now projected for October/November 2015. A pass/fail physical performance test (PPT) will be conducted at the time of list certification beginning in the spring of 2016. Candidates will receive more specific information about the PPT on the day they take the written exam.

Where can I find the announcement and application for the Fire Fighter exam?

Both the announcement and application (on-line only) will be available on the CSC website, <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/>, from July 1, 2015 through August 31, 2015.

What does it cost to apply for the Fire Fighter exam?

The application fee for the Fire Fighter examination is \$35. For more information about fees and exemptions, visit the CSC website, <http://www.state.nj.us/csc/seekers/about/steps/step1.html> "Nine Steps to a New Career."

Why does it cost \$35 to apply for the Fire Fighter exam?

The application fee helps to offset the cost of Fire Fighter testing. The expenses associated with Fire Fighter testing are very high and include rental of facilities throughout the state on multiple dates, and hundreds of staff that administer the exam. Also, portions of the test may be purchased from a private vendor who may be paid to score the exam.

What happens to the lists of eligible candidates from the previous Fire Fighter test when the new lists from the current exam are released?

When the new lists are issued, the old ones expire and will not be used any further.

Will candidates who passed the previous Fire Fighter exam be able to carry over their scores to the current exam?

No. If you want to be on the new list(s), you have to apply for the new exam before the August 31, 2015 closing date and then take and pass the new test when it is scheduled.

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What is my Applicant ID number?

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 11A:4-1, all job applicants are requested to provide their Social Security Number (SSN) on applications to establish a unique means of identifying all of their records throughout the selection and appointment processes.

However, providing your SSN is voluntary. If you do not provide your SSN, another unique identification number will be assigned to you, and that number will appear on all subsequent records related to this test.

How can I get Civil Service Veterans Preference?

You will need to meet the veterans preference requirements of the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) in order to claim veterans preference for any examination. If you meet those requirements, you should claim veterans preference on your on-line application and submit the required proof to be awarded veterans preference for the Fire Fighter examination and all future CSC exams. If you do not submit the required documentation, you will not be able to claim veterans status for this announcement.

Completed Civil Service Veterans Preference claim forms, http://www.state.nj.us/military/veterans/njdmava_form_05A-1.pdf, along with the required documentation, must be submitted directly to the DMAVA. If you need to contact DMAVA, you may do so by calling 1-888-865-8387, or at: <http://www.nj.gov/military/>.

You don't have to wait for an exam to be announced to file for veterans preference. We encourage you to do it as soon as possible to ensure that your paperwork is processed on time for this exam. Preference must be established no later than 8 days prior to list issuance, and once established, is good for life.

If I pass the test, will you tell me my rank on the list?

Your eligibility notice will include your final average, veteran status, and rank on the list for each jurisdiction for which you are eligible. Eligibility notices are mailed the day the new list issues.

What is an Eligibility List?

Candidates who pass the written examination are placed on eligibility lists based on test scores, veteran status, volunteer points, children of deceased, and residency. Eligibility lists last for at least two years, and as many as four years.

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When will I be scheduled for the PPT?

The PPT will be administered on a pass/fail basis at the time of list certification. Lists can be certified one week after they issue. Once a list is certified, those candidates that are on the certification will be scheduled to take the PPT.

What is a certification?

A certification is a list of names that we provide to an AA of a specific jurisdiction to use for their hiring process. The number of candidates on a certification is directly related to the number of positions that the AA needs to fill.

Who does the actual hiring?

Each jurisdiction has its own AA for the selection process. The CSC reviews the AA's documentation for each certification to ensure compliance with related rules and regulations. The CSC is not the AA for any Fire Fighter positions.

Does being certified mean I'll be interviewed or appointed?

No. It means that you may be scheduled to take the PPT, which will be pass/fail. If you pass the PPT, the AA may request that you agree to a background investigation, potentially including but not limited to: medical screening, psychiatric testing, drug screening, etc. Dependent upon the number of vacancies, the results of the PPT, and background investigations, you MAY be interviewed and/or considered for appointment.

What about tied scores?

We do not break tied scores. Candidates who have the same final average and veteran status have equal ranking on a certification. For example, if there are 20 people on a certification with the same final average and they're all non-veterans, they will be listed in alphabetical order by their last names, and they will all have the same rank on that certification. If one of them is reachable for an appointment, all are reachable and the AA may hire any one of them.

Do children of Fire Fighters killed in the line of duty get preference?

Yes, N.J.S.A. 40A: 14-10.1(a) grants hiring preference to children of paid Fire Fighters killed in the line of duty. The law gives them preference over non-veterans, but not over veterans. Applicants claiming this preference will be required to provide documentation which includes (1) parent's name, (2) date of death, (3) address of parent's Fire Department at the time of death, (4) a letter from the Fire Department confirming the parent was killed in the line of duty, and (5) proof of relationship to the Fire Fighter.

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Once scheduled, may I change my test center location?

No. We make every effort to schedule candidates according to the preference indicated on their applications; however, because of the high volume, we may not always be able to do so. When you file your application, it is very important that you indicate the county where you prefer to take the exam. If you leave that part of your application blank, you will automatically be scheduled for a test center in Mercer County.

How do I notify the CSC about a change in my name or primary mailing address?

You must notify the CSC if you change your name or primary mailing address at any time from the day you apply until the list expires, or if it is listed incorrectly on a notice that you receive for the CSC. You may submit the request electronically through our website at:

<https://info.csc.state.nj.us/mailer/ChangeAddress.aspx>.

You may also notify the CSC in writing. To ensure that your records are updated correctly, please include the following in your request for change:

1. Your name;
2. Your social security number or, if you have been assigned a unique number for the examination process, include that number;
3. Your new mailing address, including zip code;
4. Where you actually live, if it is different from your mailing address;
5. Your daytime telephone number;
6. Your e-mail address (if you have one); and
7. The effective date of the change.

This information may be mailed to:

NJCSC Information Center
Division of Administration and Logistics
P. O. Box 310
Trenton, NJ 08625-0310

OR faxed to (609) 984-1064.

For security reasons, changes cannot be made by phone.

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Do volunteer Fire Fighters receive extra points?

Yes, the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court made a determination on December 19, 2002, that interprets the preference provided by N.J.S.A. 40A:14-45 to volunteer Fire Fighters in civil service jurisdictions. The law provides that volunteer Fire Fighters with at least two years of volunteer service are eligible for 3 to 10 points of service credits (points) to be added to their passing score on the exam. Volunteers with two years of continuous service will get three service credit points. Another point will be added for each additional full year of continuous service, up to the maximum of 10 points.

The service credit is calculated as of the closing date (8/31/15) for filing applications for the examination announcement. There will be one list for each jurisdiction that will include both volunteers and non-volunteers. Volunteer points are **ONLY** awarded for volunteer service in fire departments, or districts, that have **BOTH** paid and volunteer Fire Fighters (also known as combination departments). For example, if you volunteer in Newark or Jersey City, or any other strictly paid fire department, you will **NOT** receive any volunteer points. Volunteer departments and districts are clearly noted on the application by * or **.

How do I show that I'm a volunteer Fire Fighter?

In order to be awarded service credit points, you must complete the volunteer Fire Fighter section on the online application. You will have to indicate the fire district or part-paid municipal fire department where you currently volunteer. If you volunteer at more than one district or department, send this information to FireFighter@csc.nj.gov. Information regarding all volunteer service will be verified with the Fire Chief/AA of your district/department.

Can you show examples of how Volunteer Points and Residency Preference works?

- Ewing Township is a civil service jurisdiction and has three volunteer fire districts (FD1, FD2 and FD3). Ewing has residential preference;
- The city of Trenton is a civil service jurisdiction but is not a volunteer department. Trenton has residential preference;
- Princeton has a volunteer fire department, but is not a civil service jurisdiction;
- Ewing Township, Trenton and Princeton are all in Mercer County.

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Example 1:

- John lives in Ewing Township and has been a volunteer at FD1 for two years. His final average on the Fire Fighter test was 90.000;
- John will appear on the Ewing Township FD1 list with a score of 93.000, because he was awarded 3 points for two years of volunteer service;
- He will also appear on the lists for Ewing Township FD2 and FD3, with a score of 90.000. He has not been given volunteer points with FD2 or FD3 because his volunteer service was not with those districts;
- He will not appear on Trenton's list because of Trenton's residential preference. However, if Trenton exhausts their municipal list, they may ask for a county-wide list, at which time John will be eligible for appointment in Trenton. He will be grouped with all non-Trenton, Mercer County residents and ranked according to vet preference and his test score of 90.000;
- He will also appear on the list for Burlington City with a score of 90.000. Because Burlington City has no residency requirements, every Fire Fighter candidate in the state who passed the test will appear on the Burlington City list.

Example 2:

- Bonnie lives in Trenton and has never been a volunteer. Her final average on the Fire Fighter test was 92.000. As a non-volunteer, her score will be 92.000 on any list for which she is eligible.
- Bonnie will not appear on any of the lists for Ewing. However, if Ewing FD 2 exhausts their municipal list, they may ask for a county-wide list, at which time Bonnie will be eligible for appointment in Ewing. She will be grouped with all non-Ewing, Mercer County residents and ranked according to vet preference and her test score.
- Bonnie will be on the list for Trenton.

Example 3:

- Mike lives in Princeton and has been a volunteer in Princeton for 12 years. His final average on the Fire Fighter test was 76.000. As a volunteer for a non-civil service jurisdiction, Mike will not be awarded volunteer points on any lists:
- Mike will not initially appear on any list.
- If any of the Ewing fire districts or Trenton exhaust their municipal lists and ask for a Mercer County list, Mike will then become eligible for appointment, based upon his vet preference and his score of 76.000.

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Tips for test takers

The test you will take is designed to assess job-related KSAOs that have been deemed essential for job success. Based on standards contained in the Federal Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection, only those job-related KSAOs that are necessary upon entry to a job are suitable for employment testing. In other words, if a subject area or ability can be learned on the job, it will not be represented on a test used to hire or promote job candidates. The CSC relies on the expertise of Subject Matter Experts (i.e., incumbents with knowledge regarding the performance standards and requirements of the job) to make these determinations. For this reason, there may be some job areas not represented on this test.

In cases where generalized test questions are used, the important thing to remember is that the nature, context, or topic of the question is not as important as the underlying KSAO required to answer the question. For example, a group of test questions referencing a set of rules and regulations may be included on a test in order to assess a job candidate's ability to interpret and apply rules based on the circumstances presented within a given situation. In this example, the specific content of the rules or the agency from which the rules have been taken is not necessarily important. In fact, the rules themselves may come from a fictitious organization. What is important is the candidate's ability to consider all the information presented, and through the proper analysis of this information, select the best answer to each question.

Below are a few test-taking strategies that may help you successfully complete your examination:

- Listen to the instructions provided by the test monitor. Ask questions if you're not sure what is being said.
- Make sure you know how much time you have to complete the exam, and then check your time periodically to keep track of the amount of time remaining. You will be responsible for tracking your own time. No warnings will be given about how much time is left. If you finish early, take some time to review your answer sheet to ensure that you have answered all of the questions and that your bubbles are darkened completely.
- You will be permitted to write in your test booklet. As you proceed through the test, you may wish to circle key words or concepts that may be important in answering test questions. However, all answers **MUST** be marked on your answer sheet before time expires, in order for them to be scored.
- Read each question carefully to ensure you fully understand what is being asked, and then try to answer the question without looking at the options.
- Review each answer option carefully and select the one that **BEST** answers the question.

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- If you don't know the answer to a question, eliminate all options that are clearly wrong and place a mark next to the ones remaining. This will help you focus on the most viable options still to be considered.
- There is no penalty for guessing. So if you are still unsure of an answer, it's better to guess than to leave it blank.
- When you have completed the test, review your answer sheet to ensure each question has been answered and that all erasures are clean.

What to expect post-exam

- Your answer sheet will be scanned by an Optical Mark Reader (OMR) and scored. The number of questions you answered correctly will be calculated. This is your "Raw" score.
- On the day the lists issue you will be mailed an eligibility/ineligibility notification card indicating whether you achieved a passing score or not. If you passed the exam, you will be given your score and rank for each jurisdiction that you qualify.
- Candidates who have been certified must respond, in writing, to the AA listed on their certification notice within the timeframe stated on the notice that they are interested in the position. If candidates do not respond within this timeframe, they may be removed from the list and **NOT** considered for future appointments.
- The AA may select from the top three ranked candidates for each position available. This is known as the "Rule of Three."
- Once a certification has been exhausted or has expired, another certification may be issued as other job openings arise. Additional eligible candidates will appear on the new certification in rank order based on their scores. This process will continue until the entire eligible list is exhausted or eventually the list expires.

Conclusion

This guide was designed to help familiarize candidates with aspects of the administration of the 2015 New Jersey Fire Fighter Exam. The suggestions provided here are not exhaustive; we encourage candidates to engage in whatever additional preparation strategies they believe will enhance their chances of performing effectively on the examination.

Best of Luck on the Exam!