

# A Fire Academy that Makes House Calls

Michael Archer | February 27, 2009

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Among the fire academies accredited by the California State Fire Marshall, Victor Valley College (VVC) Fire Technology program has a couple of attributes that help it stand out from the pack. A comprehensive aircraft firefighting course and the ability to bring the academy to a military base to provide firefighter training for military personnel are unique capabilities that few, if any, fire academies provide. Tom Turner, Fire Technology Program Director for the past five years at the college, provides us with some insight into their academy.

## Program Details

"We're a Certified Regional Academy with the California State Fire Marshall," Turner explained. "We have courses that are available from entry level all the way up to fire officer."

"We have two basic fire academies which prepare the cadet to receive his [or] her Firefighter I certification, which meets the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requirements and the California State Fire Marshall requirements," Turner continued. "We present about 90 courses of instruction in two eight-week academies per year that run Monday through Friday."

The classes offered by the program are extensive and include HazMat, firefighting, aircraft firefighting, prevention classes, investigation classes, and driver/operator classes. "We cover the whole gamut," he added.

## Seasoned Staff

The trainers at VVC are a blend of seasoned veteran firefighters and active-duty firefighters who are up to speed on the latest innovations in the field. "I retired as a Captain with 23 years of experience at Victorville Fire Department," Turner stated. "I've been teaching at VVC for almost 20 years."

"We have 30-40 adjunct faculty members from all the fire departments in the area who come to assist with instruction," Turner said. "Our staff keeps up our accreditations on all the latest technology, which is why I like using the guys who are [active-duty] firefighters to come in here and assist because they're in touch with what's really going on out there."

## Unique Qualities

For those who want to have an edge over others in the field, Turner's program offers some unique training that is not available at most academies.

"Our aircraft firefighting course is a Fire Control Five class which is conducted in San Bernardino County, where we use their facilities to train," Turner explained, "but we do the classroom training here."

## ABOUT MICHAEL ARCHER



Michael Archer is a wildfire consultant and writer. He has written articles for *Home and Fire Magazine*, *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*, and other publications, lectured to many groups about fire issues, been quoted by Associated Press and USA Today reporters, and also appeared on cable and network TV discussing wildfire issues. Currently, he is acting as webmaster and technical consultant to Wildfire Research Network ([www.wildfireresearch.org](http://www.wildfireresearch.org)), a Los Angeles-based citizens' action group that promotes firefighting issues involving the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

His "*Firebombers Incorporated*" series of novels gives readers an intriguing "what-if" scenario on how 21st century technology could modernize the wildland firefighting force. His novel "Firestorm," received excellent reviews from *Writers Digest*, *The Nashville News*, *The VVA Veteran* (Vietnam Veterans of America's magazine) and firefighting professionals across the United States. His company, Firebomber Publications, donates 50 percent of net profits to organizations that support the families of injured and fallen firefighters.



You can visit his website at: [www.firebomberpublications.com](http://www.firebomberpublications.com)

Firestorm can be purchased at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Comments can be sent to: [marcher47@firebomberpublications.com](mailto:marcher47@firebomberpublications.com)

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What's more, if servicemembers can't come to the academy, the academy can come to them. "We also have the ability to go off-campus," Turner continued. "So if a military training officer wanted to have training on their base, we can accommodate that also."

**Military Connection**

VVC is located near some major military bases and encourages vets to apply. The academy offers a degree program for Fire Technology (18 units), plus general education courses that allows vets to get an associate degree in Fire Technology. "We do get quite a few veterans coming through our program, since we have Fort Irwin nearby, and the Marine Logistics Base (MCLB) up the road in Barstow," said Turner.

And as with other academies, VVC likes what veterans bring to the program. "If they've been in the military, they already have the discipline to succeed in the Fire Academy, whereas people who haven't been in the military seem to lack a little direction, so veterans do make my job easier," asserts Turner.

**For The Future**

But Turner is not letting any grass grow under his feet, as the program at VVC continues to expand. "We're in the process of obtaining our International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) certification," Turner said, "which will allow graduates to be certified not only by the California State Fire Marshall, but through International Fire Accreditation Service, which is what military people need for their certifications."

(IFSAC is a peer driven, self governing system that accredits both fire service certification programs and higher education fire-related degree programs.)

"We're also in the process of setting up online courses, going through our curriculum to see what classes we can offer," he added.

**For More Information**

VVC Academy is a busy place and people interested in applying to their academy need to allow for that fact. "We don't have any problem filling our program up," Turner confirms. "Out of 30 classes offered for the next school period, 25 are already full." Word to the wise? Apply today. Visit their website through this link:

[www.vvc.edu/academic/fire\\_technology](http://www.vvc.edu/academic/fire_technology)

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