

Fire Academy Seeks Vets as Cadets

Michael Archer | May 29, 2009

Crafton Hills College, near San Bernardino, Calif., offers a comprehensive firefighter training program that has been approved by the California State Fire Marshal. Chief Dan Sullivan, an Army veteran, runs the academy and has great respect for what military vets bring to the table. Here's what the academy offers:

Curriculum

Being in a college environment, cadets receive college credit for their work. "They get 12 units of college credit and it costs them about \$3,000," says Sullivan. "Half of the curriculum is in the training room and is academic, the other part is hands-on."

The half that's hands-on is a bit different from your standard college curriculum. "We study building construction because we need to know how to open it up for forcible entry techniques and ventilation," Sullivan continues. "It's almost like a surgeon: They have to know the anatomy in order to operate, and what kind of building we're getting into when it's all dark and smoky."

Since firefighting is a physically demanding job, the curriculum reflects that. "We stress teamwork, physical fitness, every morning they do PT for at least an hour-and-a-half before they start," explains Sullivan. "They get here around 6:00 a.m. and PT is over about 8:00 p.m."

Variety

The training at Crafton Hills reflects the variety of firefighting. "Every day is a different day for 12 and a half weeks," according to Sullivan. "We raise and lower ladders, we do hose lays, we study fire behavior, yesterday we had a burn with flammable liquids and flammable gasses and they were there until 10 o'clock last night doing burns."

It's not all fighting fires, either. The cadets do a lot of technical and low-angle rescue, rappelling, and they work on the different aspects of extricating people out of automobiles. What's more, the day starts in a wrecking yard where they dismantle five or six different automobiles and tear them all apart in an effort to learn extrication.

"We practice rescues where we rescue civilians as well as firefighters. A big part of it is wildland, because there's wildland interface everywhere now," Sullivan says.

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 USAToday 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), 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

Firestorm can be purchased at Amazon.com

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Diverse Instructors

Crafton Hills Academy attracts the best instructors from fire departments in Southern California — something that can weigh heavily on a cadet's future as a firefighter. "We have instructors here from Anaheim, Fullerton, San Bernardino County, San Bernardino City, Redlands, CAL FIRE, who will look at the cadets and ask 'Do we want to hire these guys or not?', so we're trying to get a good reputation for people hired from our academy," Sullivan adds. "We work real close with the county (San Bernardino County Fire Department)."

And for those interested in adding aircraft firefighting to their resume, San Bernardino Regional Emergency Training Center is right down the road.

Admissions

In order to get into Crafton Hills Fire Academy cadets need to take two classes (Fire Protection Organization and Fire Prevention Technology), as well as an EMT class. CPAT or Biddle is also required and prospective students also have to buy uniforms.

Military Connection

At Crafton Hills Academy, they find veterans make the best cadets. "Former military are usually in a leadership role," Sullivan confirms. "Right now, we have someone who was in the Army as our cadet Academy Leader. We have an assistant academy leader who is a former Marine. These two run the academy when I'm not around."

"We definitely do a lot of teamwork concepts and leadership — it's a big part of our academy," he continues.

Having been through boot camp in the military also prepares cadets for the academy.

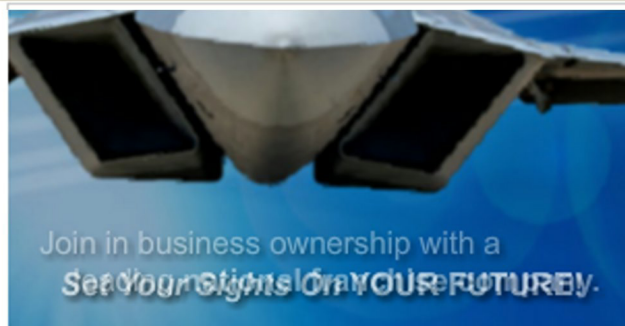
"Even though they take classes, they really don't know what they're getting into until they're here," Sullivan warns.

"But once they graduate after 12 weeks and have had to pay \$3,000, they get an idea, 'Hey, do I really want to pursue this career or not?' So I figure, if we give them a taste of everything, just a taste of it, and from that point on, if they want to go for it, they know what they have to do."

For more information about Crafton Hills Basic Fire Academy: [http://www.craftonhills.edu/Courses %26 Programs/Public Safety %26 Services/Fire Technology](http://www.craftonhills.edu/Courses_%26_Programs/Public_Safety_%26_Services/Fire_Technology)

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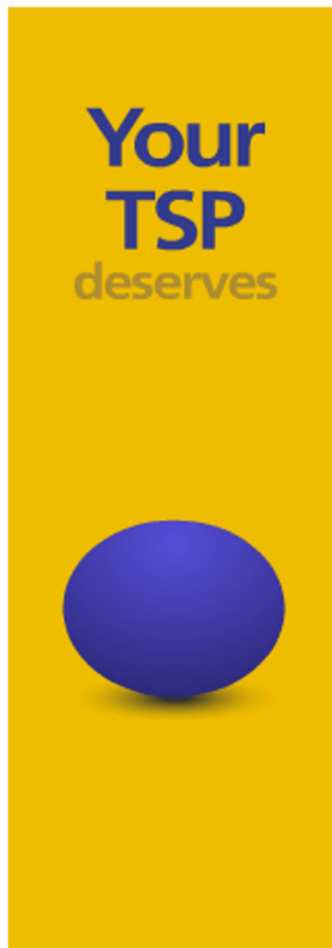
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