

Firefighting Opportunities in the OC

Michael Archer | July 28, 2009

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The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) is a regional fire service agency that serves 22 cities in Orange County, Calif., as well as unincorporated areas in that county. The OCFA protects more than 1,380,000 residents from its 62 fire stations. OCFA Reserve Firefighters work 20 stations throughout Orange County as well. Capt. Greg McKeown is the Public Information Officer (PIO) for Orange County Fire Authority and provides us with an inside look at this Southern California fire department.

Past and Present

The area currently covered by the Orange County Fire Authority started out under different jurisdictions. "Originally it was California Department of Forestry, and then it became Orange County Fire Department," McKeown explained. "After the Orange County bankruptcy [on Dec. 6, 1994], it became the Orange County Fire Authority."

The department covers a diversified area in Southern California. "We serve about 22 cities, 550 square miles with approximately 780 career firefighters," McKeown continued. "We also have about 300 reserve firefighters available in an on-call basis."

Military in the Ranks

As with many other fire departments, Orange County Fire Authority appreciates veterans. "We have a lot of veterans in the department," said McKeown. "In the last couple of academy classes, we hired some ex-Navy SEALs, some Special Ops guys."

"We find that veterans offer good life experience, good mechanical aptitude experience, and are used to operating in a semi-militaristic organization."

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), 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

Comments can be sent to: marcher47@firebomberpublications.com

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Preparation is Key

Although being a veteran is an advantage, candidates for jobs with the Orange County Fire Authority still need to prepare to be a firefighter before applying. "Veterans looking for a career with OCFA should get as much experience as they train to be a firefighter, taking an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] class, and take fire science courses at the local community colleges," said McKeown. "That kind of experience will help them do better in the training process."

Firefighters are required to be in superb physical shape, and the entry requirements reflect this. "They also need to be prepared for the physical ability test [Biddle]," he added. "We have our own fire academy. Being an academy graduate is useful and it looks good on the resume."

For Further Information

If working in trendy Orange County, Calif., with beautiful beaches, a mild climate, and some exciting nightlife appeals to you, consider Orange County Fire Authority. For more information on the Orange County Fire Academy, contact Capt. Mike Contreras, who is the OCFA Academy Coordinator, at 949-582-9260 and for more information on Orange County Fire Authority itself, visit their website at www.ocfa.org. "I would encourage all veterans to apply, because we're always looking for good people," McKeown concluded.

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