

Important 'Points' to Consider

Michael Archer | March 12, 2007

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Would you consider 10 points to be important to your career? Many firefighter candidates do. When thousands of people apply for a job, you'd better believe that a lot of people do. This is the first of a series of articles about "veteran's points" that are offered by many fire departments.

One Versus 22,000

There's a new game show on TV right now called "1 vs. 100." Those sound like pretty steep odds, but imagine if it was "1 vs. 22,000!" What kind of an edge would you need to get a job against odds like that? What if I told you it was about 10 points? Several firefighters I've spoken with mentioned that fire departments they applied to granted them "veteran's points" because they had served in the U.S. armed forces. Typically, this takes the form of 10 bonus points on their written exam.

How much difference can 10 points make? Just ask Foreman Gabe Huerta of LA County Fire Department. "You've got to realize that there were 22,000 people who applied and it was the 10 Veteran's Points that got me my job. If you score a 94 on the written test, those points push you up to a 104," says Huerta.

"In fact, LA County enrolled me in the fire academy and two weeks later, LA City Fire Department sent me a letter announcing that I'd been accepted into their academy, too. I had to turn down the [LA City Fire] job because I had already signed on with LA County. It was like 'When it rains it pours!'" Huerta adds.

As a note, LA County and LA City Fire Departments are two of the highest rated departments in Southern California. Being accepted by either is like being accepted at a prestigious college. To be accepted at both is quite an achievement.

Combat Experience Required?

Not all departments treat veterans the same. Some only grant veteran's points to servicemembers who have actually been involved in combat, and some provide fewer points than others. Captain Brian Savage of Culver City Fire Department remarked about this fact. "I found out that many departments give you bonus points on your exams for coming from a military background, although some municipalities only count it if you've had combat experience." Engineer Tom Zelinski, also of Culver City Fire Department, pointed out that not all fire departments allot the same number of points. "LA City gave 10 points for veterans of declared wars; Culver City gave three points for any veteran's experience."

So What do Recruiters Say?

We've heard from some firefighters about their personal experience, but what do the fire department recruiters say on this issue? In the next installment, some of them get to sound off about what they're looking for and how (or if) they award bonus points to veterans.

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.wildfiresearch.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

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