

Important 'Points' to Consider: LAFD

Michael Archer | April 13, 2007

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Veterans interested in pursuing a firefighting career, have many employment opportunities in Southern California, but few that match a career with the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). LAFD has a storied history that stretches back to 1886 when a fledgling metropolis commissioned a new fire service to protect the city. As Los Angeles expanded, so too did the LAFD. From those humble beginnings, LAFD has grown to encompass 470 square miles, 104 fire stations, and more than 3,500 personnel who protect more than 4 million people.

And for veterans searching to find a home after life in the military, the LAFD is reaching out to people they prize very highly. "We look at the military as a strong resource pool due to the fact that a lot of them have already been indoctrinated with the 'chain of command' type of structure that we have," commented Capt. Darnell Wade, head of the LAFD Recruitment Center. "As far as our training, we know the military has similar rules and prides themselves on the way that they train their people as we do, and our deal is 'train as if your life depends on it, because it does.'"

Paramedic/EMT Training

Okay, so you've decided to take a closer look at working with the LAFD. What do they want to see in addition to your veteran status? "One of the things that we think that would benefit anybody, especially military personnel," adds Capt. Wade, "is obtaining either their paramedic certification or their EMT [Emergency Medical Technician]. EMT certification is not a requirement, but it's highly desirable, which I do consider a job requirement."

What about recent graduating classes of LAFD firefighters? What common credentials do they have? "All of the classes we've hired thus far, everybody has already obtained their EMT," Capt. Wade summarized.

Veteran's Points

And what about those all-important Veteran's Points? "We have Veteran's Points as well, which are given at the interview," says Capt. Wade. "If you achieve at least 90 percent on the interview, you will be pushed through to background. With the five Veteran's Points, if you got at least an 85 on the interview, you automatically advance to background, so it can be a big deal."

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

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Reaching Out to Women

When we think about firefighters, we tend to think of big, burly guys busting down a door or hauling heavy equipment into a burning building. But not all firefighters fit this image. "I reach out to women," says Capt. Wade, "women who are interested in a real challenging career, an exciting career, one that has a lot of avenues in terms of growth. A lot of people think that all we do is fires and rescues, but we have so many other career options after you do your initial year or so as a firefighter that the opportunities are outstanding, and I want women to realize that this is a valuable and viable career option for them."

In Summary

You may ask yourself, "Yeah, we get these Veteran's Points that help, but what are the benefits like?" According to Capt. Wade and the literature available from LAFD, a firefighter's salary range is between \$48,609 and \$67,275. This is just the base salary and there are bonuses for people in command rank jobs and in other categories like fitness, special training, etc. Add to this the medical benefits, credit union, and first-class retirement benefits, and you have a total package that's hard to beat. "We have outstanding pay, an outstanding schedule, we work 11 days a month on 24 hour shifts where you work three days, then get four days off," Capt. Wade concludes. "The salary is great, the benefits are great, it is just a win-win situation with LAFD."

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