

## SBCoFD: No Boring Desk Job

Michael Archer | November 20, 2009

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With a spectacular natural setting — including 50 miles of scenic coastline, beautiful valleys, and rugged mountain peaks — Santa Barbara County is one of the most desirable places in the world to live and work. Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBCoFD) serves this idyllic region that covers 1,450 square miles with 225 members and 16 fire stations. Capt. David Sadecki, the SBCoFD's public information officer, tells us what it takes to be a firefighter.

### Getting a Foot in the Door

As with any job, SBCoFD has some basic standards candidates must meet. "Minimum requirements to apply are a high school diploma, valid California driver's license, and EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) certification," said Sadecki. "Another good thing is to graduate with an AS degree in fire science."

Once you meet those requirements, you have to pass the usual series of tests. "There's the physical agility [and] the written exam, and then an oral interview for the top scorers on the written exam," Sadecki continued.

What's more, prospective candidates should talk to those already in the field to get a better feel for the job. The SBCoFD encourages people to go into the fire stations and ask questions, request a ride-along, or talk to other firefighters from that department.

### Don't Discount Your Military Experience

In addition to meeting the minimum requirements, experience can be an important factor in getting hired. For example, the SBCoFD looks favorably upon candidates who have a background in the medical field (paramedics or emergency medicine), military, or fire fighting.

"Any kind of firefighting experience you can get, either in the military or once you get out of the military, like on a Hot Shot crew (seasonal firefighters employed by Vandenberg Air Force Base and SBCoFD), is good," he added. "Vandenberg AFB has civilian firefighters and some of them have become county firefighters."

### 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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### Everyday is Different

This is not your run-of-the-mill job with a predictable pattern to the workday — variety is the essence of being a firefighter with SBCoFD. "We go to residential structure fires, we do a lot of wildland firefighting because of all the wildland areas that we have, and we protect a lot of the state lands," Sadecki revealed. "We also do wildland urban interface firefighting — we've experienced a lot of that lately."

And, different scenarios call for different specialties. Sadecki explains: "We have regular municipal fire equipment, we have one ladder truck, we have brush trucks, we have helicopters, and bulldozers, so there are sometimes jobs available for dozer operators, and for helicopter pilots (both of their helicopter pilots are ex-military)."

### Said it Before, Say it Again: Veterans Preferred

Even though Sadecki never served, he and the SBCoFD hold veterans in high regard, and consider their work ethic and strength of character an asset to the fire service.

"The two organizations [the fire service and the military] are similar in discipline and chain of command, so I think they would fit in very well with [giving/taking] orders... I think the military people figure that out really quick," he said.

"Being a firefighter, you're basically on a team that could be as small as three people, [or] 50 on a structure fire, or thousands on a wildland fire; and everybody's got their place, their little piece of the puzzle to get the job done and I'm sure the military knows all about that."

For more information, visit their website at [www.sbcfire.com](http://www.sbcfire.com). And, to find more opportunities in law enforcement or firefighting, visit Military.com's [Veteran Job Board on our Careers Channel](#).

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