

Vets in Demand for Seasonal Firefighting

Michael Archer | December 18, 2008

SHARE

The Riverside Community College Ben Clark Training Center (RCC) is one of a few fire academies accredited by the California State Fire Marshall's Office. Closely associated with CAL FIRE — the state firefighting agency — it offers a diverse set of certifications to cadets, and looks favorably on veterans for a coveted spots in their classes.

Veteran Firefighter

Captain Dan Heiser, Fire Academy coordinator, brings a lot of experience to the job. "I've been employed by CAL FIRE for 20 years and helped with the academy as far as instruction for a few years as well," he recounted. "I've been a contract employee at the academy for two years as coordinator." Having worked on city contracts (where CAL FIRE is a city's fire department), rural communities, and on fire truck companies, he has a lifetime of experience to give new cadets.

Full-time Academy

RCC offers an intense program. "The academy is a full-time academy, they do not have a part-time curriculum," said Heiser. "It's five days a week, for 12 weeks. There are some Saturdays, generally two to three Saturdays per academy."

Additionally, the days start early and run long. "We run from 0600 to 1800 every day, starting off with PT in the morning for about one and a half hours, and then they're released to shower and change," Heiser explained. "We get them lined up for inspection at 0830, afterwards they're either sent to the classroom or other duty assignments."

Diverse Curricula

"As far as curriculum is concerned, they'll walk away with 16 certificates total, 12 of which are California State Fire Marshall accredited," Heiser added. "These certificates are things like Basic Fire Control, Incident Command, Low-Angle Rescue, Trench Rescue, so we have a lot of rescue elements, and Hazardous Materials, which makes cadets suitable for city or wildland firefighting."

For those just starting out, the job of a seasonal firefighter lets them get their feet wet. "One certificate is the CAL FIRE 67 Hour, which is required if you want to apply to CAL FIRE as a Seasonal Firefighter, which is good for the newer cadets because they generally want to apply as a Seasonal Firefighter," said Capt. Heiser.

Prerequisites

The prerequisites to get in are that candidates need to be 18 years old or older, have a GED or, preferably, a high school diploma. Additionally, candidates should have taken Fire Protection Organization or Intro to Fire Science at RCC, but if you take Intro to Fire Science at another institution, the RCC will accept that, according to Heiser. "At the time you apply, you need to have passed a CPAT or Biddle test."

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

[Michael Archer Article Archives](#)
[Discussion Boards](#)

advertisement



Home Circle™

Go to homecircle.com



Go to homecircle.com



Limited Seating

There are only a few slots available at RCC. "There are 32 cadets in a class, and since we are affiliated with the Riverside County Training Officers Association (RCTOA), I reserve 24 positions for departments that belong to RCTOA, with each department getting 2 spots, except CAL FIRE, which gets 4 spots, since they're a larger department," said Heiser. "If a department has Explorers or potential employees, they will nominate them for the academy."

But even if you don't belong to one of those departments, don't lose hope. "If they don't use them, any civilian is welcome to approach any one of those departments affiliated with the RCTOA and ask for a nomination, no strings attached," Heiser added. "Each department has its own procedure that they go through. An example is Riverside City, which has an interview process to pick their top two people who they're going to nominate. This helps separate the men from the boys."

Veterans' Edge

As with many fire departments, RCC looks favorably on veterans. "RCC currently has no policy giving 'Veterans Points' to potential applicants," Heiser explained. "Although I always attempt to accommodate military personnel, being that they transition well into our organization. They have all the characteristics we look for: the hard work ethic, wanting to learn, and teamwork"

"We like helping people who are going out to serve their country," Heiser said. "The military and firefighter worlds work hand-in-hand, so we definitely encourage and support the military."

Application Process

Where can potential recruits find out more? Prospective cadets can access the RCC application at www.rctoa.org. Applications can be mailed or walked in at the Ben Clark Training Center. The website is updated regularly.

Sound Off...What do you think? [Join the discussion.](#)



Copyright 2011 Michael Archer. All opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of Military.com.

WHAT'S HOT >>

- [Producers Want Rumsfeld on TV Show](#)
- [Ex-Army Translator Acquitted of Spying](#)
- Def Tech: [P-3 Narco Sub Hunting](#)
- Kit Up!: [Barrett's New MRAD Rifle](#)
- The Line: [Five-Star Petraeus?](#)
- DVD Review: ['The Social Network'](#)
- Games: ['Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon'](#)
- [Interview with UFC Fighter Mike Swick](#)

advertisement

Military.com
GI BILL CALCULATOR

VA Loan Benefits

Veterans Qualify for \$0-down VA Loans.
Fast, Secure, No Obligation.

Ads by Google