

# **San Bernardino City Fire Department Firefighter Cadet Program Overview**

## **Objective:**

1. To increase interest among San Bernardino's youth and young adults in a fire service career.
2. To create opportunities for San Bernardino City's community members to obtain a rewarding career with the San Bernardino City Fire Department (SBFD).
3. To strengthen the connection between the SBFD and the community they serve through involvement in fire department programs that teach character, community service, and job skills.
4. To maximize the benefits of a diverse community by increasing diversity in the community's fire department.

## **Program Summary**

SBFD's Fire Cadet Program is designed to provide a pathway for community members to obtain a career in the fire service. The multiple levels of this program focus on individuals from high school age through young adults. Participants receive insight into the benefits of a career in the fire service, training on fire and EMS skills, and mentoring from fire department personnel. Participation in the program can start as young as the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and continues through the post-high school/college age groups.

## **Program Benefits**

- The training and experience that participants receive can be used in a broad range of fire service career options including jobs with the SBFD, or other fire departments throughout the state.
- The program exposes participants to the rigorous demands and professional attitude that are an intrinsic part of being a firefighter. By investing in these individuals and hiring through this pool of participants, the fire department knows that they are receiving a quality employee who is already a part of the local community.
- Employees that come from the community generally have pre-established relationships with other community members including teachers, coaches, clergy, neighbors, and service groups. These relationships are important as they facilitate an understanding of community needs, and provide a pathway for educating community members on how they can effectively contribute to the safety of their homes and neighborhoods. Each of these contributes to an improved delivery of fire related services.
- Recruiting from the community promotes a level of diversity in the fire department that is reflective of the city itself. Expanding the diversity of the workforce is a benefit to the work environment, and the public that is served.

## **Program Components:**

The program consists of three distinct levels that bring the participant progressively closer to an opportunity for full-time employment with the SBFD. These include high school level programs, the Fire

Cadet program, and the Firefighter Trainee program. Each of these programs will provide training and education that can be applied toward a fire service career. The level of training and education can range from basic orientation to firefighting and EMS principles, to completion of college-level courses that are prerequisites for State accredited fire academies and paramedic programs.

The SBFD Cadet program will be the next step in the progression toward full-time employment with the fire department. This will be a paid, part-time position. The program provides a pay rate of \$10 per hour with a schedule of approximately 20 hours per week. The target group for recruitment will be those individuals who have been involved in the high school level programs outlined above. In addition to working as a Cadet, each participant will be required to enroll in and successfully complete college classes that will help meet the minimum requirements for the position of firefighter. The objectives of the cadet program will be to provide the following:

- To provide gainful employment in a position with SBFD that is related to their ultimate goal of being a full-time firefighter.
- To provide time to acquire the requisite training and certifications to meet the minimum qualifications for the position of firefighter (P-1) or firefighter/paramedic (P-2) with the SBFD. This includes EMT-1 certification, college level fire education classes, and may include paramedic certification.
- To provide the fire department and the City with a pool of employees that can perform tasks that are beneficial to the department and the community as a whole.

Each of these functions will prepare the cadet to take the responsibilities of being a community servant and a member of the SBFD.

### **Cadet Selection Process**

The selection process for this position will be similar to the City's current firefighter hiring process. Conducting a comprehensive selection process at this stage is important because candidates who successfully complete the curriculum and requirements of the Cadet program will be eligible to move directly to a firefighter trainee position, and ultimately to a full-time position. Candidates will be selected through a validated process that is highly relevant to the position of firefighter. The selection process will not emphasize specific technical knowledge of firefighting principles, but instead focus on compatibility characteristics such as teamwork, tolerance for others, customer service traits, general mechanical aptitude, and basic math skills. Candidates who show the highest qualities in these areas will move on to oral interviews, physical ability assessments, and ultimately to a full background investigation. The background investigation will include the candidates' personal history, a polygraph, and a psychological evaluation. These are standard components for employment with the SBFD. Individuals who do not meet the minimum standards on these assessments cannot be employed as a firefighter with the SBFD, and therefore would be disqualified from the cadet program as well.

- **Firefighter Trainee/Full-Time Employment**  
Candidates who successfully complete the cadet program will be eligible to apply for the position of Firefighter Trainee. This position is a transitional step to full-time employment designed to provide advanced training for the firefighter position. The candidate will be placed in a full-time training schedule and paid at a rate approximately 20% below bottom step firefighter without benefits. Candidates who have not completed a California State accredited fire academy may be sponsored in this position by the SBFD and compensated while they attend. Candidates who have

already completed an accredited fire academy may be allowed to skip this stage of the program and be immediately considered for full-time employment.

Once the candidate successfully completes the trainee program, they will be offered employment as a firefighter with the SBFD as positions become available. Depending on the number of job openings and the number of participants in the program, there may be a need to recruit additional applicants for firefighter positions through conventional means (open recruitment). However, first priority would be given to those participants who successfully complete the SBFD recruitment program.

### **Application Process**

Applications will be accepted from those that meet the following requirements:

- 18 to 24 years of age:
- A graduate (or currently attending) the Public Safety Academy
- A current or past member of the SBFD Explorer program
- A City resident and currently enrolled in fire science or EMS classes at an accredited school (will likely be a community college).

Applications can be obtained at the following locations:

- City of San Bernardino Fire Department Headquarters (200 E. Third St. San Bernardino, CA 92410). For more information please call San Bernardino Direct at 909-384-7272.
- San Bernardino Employment Agency (600 N. Arrowhead Ave. San Bernardino CA 92401 (909) 888-7881 Ask for Phung Nguyen)

### **Applicants between the ages of 15 to 21 that do not meet the minimum requirements**

All applicants between the ages of 15 to 21 that do not meet the above stated requirements still have an opportunity to pursue their interest in the fire service by becoming a member of the City of San Bernardino Fire Explorer Program. This program provides young adults from 15 to 21 years of age with an opportunity to learn about and prepare for a career in the Fire Service. The program is a joint venture with "Learning for Life". This is a hands-on program that exposes participants to many career experiences, leadership opportunities, and community service activities. The primary goals of the program are to help young adults choose a career path within fire and emergency services and to challenge them to become responsible citizens of their communities and country. Please contact Chief Mike Alder at 909-384-5371 for further information.

### **Job-Fair Opportunity**

A "Job-Fair" opportunity to further explain and answer questions regarding this opportunity is being planned during the month of August 2011. Please check back for the exact date and time.