

Firefighter

Very hard to get hired, very good once you are. Pension, 24-hour shifts, six figures.

TYPICAL PAY

\$100,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$65k to \$128k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 4 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Municipal fire departments,
airports, industrial sites**

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
The minimum. Sciences and phys ed help.
- 2 NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) certification** 1 year
Most candidates take a one-year pre-service firefighter program at a college (Seneca, Durham, Lambton, the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC), Lakeland in Alberta). It includes NFPA 1001 Firefighter I and II, 1072 hazmat and often DZ (heavy truck) licence training.
- 3 Medical and fitness certifications** Weeks
Emergency medical responder or higher, CPR, and the physical test (CPAT or similar).
- 4 Apply and compete** 1 to 5 years
Departments hire in rounds. Thousands apply for a few dozen spots. Many candidates apply for 2 to 5 years before getting hired.
- 5 Recruit training and probation** About 1 year
Department academy of 8 to 16 weeks, then a probationary year.

Pros and cons

- + Pension, benefits and high pay with no degree
- + 24-hour shifts mean 20+ days off a month
- + Tight crew culture
- Extremely competitive to get in, can take years
- Trauma exposure and cancer risk
- Sleep disruption from night calls

Optional boosts

Primary care paramedic diploma. A Red Seal trade. DZ or Class 3 (heavy truck) licence. Fire prevention or inspection certifications.

Good to know

Most calls are not fires

At a typical Canadian department, only a small share of calls are actual fires. Medical calls, alarms and collisions make up the bulk.

Most firefighters in Canada are volunteers

Well over half of Canada's firefighters are volunteer or paid-on-call, serving small towns and rural areas.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Firefighters, wages (updated Nov 2025)
Ontario: Firefighter training and certification

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/firefighter>



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