

Fire Inspector

Check buildings before they burn, and work out why when one does. Most people come to it after years on a fire engine.

TYPICAL PAY

\$75,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$47k to \$119k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

City and county fire departments, state fire marshal offices, insuran...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
 Any diploma. Physics, shop and English all help. So does a clean driving record and a clean background.
- 2 Firefighter first, usually** 2 to 5 years
 Two to five years on an engine gives you the fire behavior knowledge that inspection work rests on. Some departments require it.
- 3 Fire science schooling** 2 to 4 years, often part time
 A community college associate degree or an online bachelor's in fire administration. Many people do this while working shifts.
- 4 Certify as an inspector** A few months per level
 Written exams against the national professional qualification standards, issued through your state fire marshal or a certifying body.
- 5 Add investigation, plans review or fire marshal** Ongoing
 Each is its own certification and its own set of courses, stacked over a career.

Pros and cons

- + Daytime hours after a career of night shifts
- + Public pension and stable government employment
- + Free federal training throughout your career
- Most routes ask you to be a firefighter first
- You are the person telling owners to spend money
- Investigation scenes are grim and sometimes fatal ones

Good to know

The federal fire school is free

The National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland charges no tuition to fire service professionals, and its courses can be evaluated for college credit. It is one of the few genuinely free professional sch...

Some fire investigators carry a badge and a gun

Arson is a crime, so in many states fire investigators are sworn peace officers with arrest powers. It is one of the few jobs that sits in the fire service and in law enforcement at the same time.

Optional boosts

Fire Inspector I and II. Fire Plans Examiner. Fire Investigator. Fire and Life Safety Educator.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Fire Inspectors and Investigators (33-2021.00)
 National Fire Protection Association
 International Code Council: certification
 National Fire Academy, United States Fire Administration

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/fire-inspector>



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