

Firefighter: Excerpts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008 – 2009 edition.

Employment Outlook: Employment of workers in fire fighting occupations is expected to grow by 12 percent over the 2006-2016 decade, which is as fast as the average for all occupations. Prospective fire fighters are expected to face keen competition for available job openings. Applicants with the best chances are those who are physically fit and score the highest on physical conditioning and mechanical aptitude exams. Those who have completed some fire fighter education at a community college and have EMT or paramedic certification will have an additional advantage.

Earnings: Median annual earnings of fire fighters were \$41,190 in May 2006 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$66,140.

Nature of the Work: Fire fighters help protect the public by responding to fires and a variety of other emergencies. When they aren't responding to fires and other emergencies, fire fighters clean and maintain equipment, study fire science and fire fighting techniques, conduct practice drills and fire inspections, and participate in physical fitness activities.

Fire fighting involves the risk of death or injury from floors caving in, walls toppling, traffic accidents, and exposure to flames and smoke. Fire fighters also may come into contact with poisonous, flammable, or explosive gases and chemicals and radioactive materials, which may have immediate or long-term effects on their health. For these reasons, they must wear protective gear that can be very heavy and hot.

Work hours of fire fighters are longer and more varied than the hours of most other workers. Many fire fighters work more than 50 hours a week, and sometimes they may work longer. In some agencies, fire fighters are on duty for 24 hours, then off for 48 hours.