



TOWN OF NEEDHAM
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF FIREFIGHTERS
POLICY AND PROCEDURES
Policy#109

I. APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to the appointment of entry-level Firefighters of the TOWN OF NEEDHAM (the “Town”), as a result of competitive examination process, transfer or reinstatement.

II. POLICY

2.1 The Needham Fire Department will select new firefighters according to the procedures set out below. All members of the Department assigned to the recruitment, testing, vetting, investigation and selection of new firefighters shall commit themselves to hiring only the best candidates, and to furthering the Department’s standards of excellence.

2.2 The Town will strive to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds, cultures, genders, and race, and will acknowledge education, character and public service in the selection of new firefighters.

III. PROCEDURES

3.1 The Director of Human Resources and the Fire Chief are responsible for the recruitment and recommendation of new firefighters. The Town Manager is the appointing authority for all firefighters. The Fire Chief is responsible for overseeing the selection process in cooperation with the Human Resources Department.

3.2 Basic Selection Criteria

All candidates for employment as firefighters must meet the following basic selection criteria (minimum entrance requirements):

- Be a U.S. Citizen or otherwise eligible to work in the United States.
- Not be a convicted felon or have any equivalent convictions that would be a felony in Massachusetts.
- Be at least 21 years of age at the time of the examination.
- Be a high school graduate or possess a General Equivalency Diploma.
- Be a non-smoker.
- Have a Massachusetts driver’s license, or the ability to obtain one within a month of appointment.
- Have the ability to pass a physical and psychological examination and any other requirements required to attend a fire academy.
- Have the ability to complete the fire training academy.

- Be certified as an EMT-Paramedic unless waived by the Town Manager. Any candidate receiving such a waiver must be certified as a paramedic within four (4) years of the date of hire as a condition of employment. Termination of employment due to a failure to obtain the required certification within the timeframe shall be final and binding without right of appeal.

3.3 Elements of the Selection Process

The elements of the selection process for full time firefighters are listed below in the order they occur. It will be the responsibility of the Fire Chief to ensure that they are administered, scored, evaluated and interpreted in a uniform manner.

- 3.3.1 The Town will conduct a recruiting campaign prior to the administering of an entrance examination. Information about the exam, including the date, time, location, and application process will be widely disseminated.
- 3.3.2 The Town will select a vendor to administer an entrance examination to qualified candidates who meet the basic selection criteria.
- 3.3.3 Candidates who meet the basic selection criteria may register for an exam. An exam will be held at a minimum once every two years. If a test is held annually, candidates may hold their score for one additional year, provided that they do not take the exam again. Candidates who re-take the exam forfeit their right to hold their prior exam score for one additional year.
- 3.3.4 The passing grade of the examination will be 70. Candidates who do not meet the passing grade threshold, will not appear on the list of eligible candidates for further consideration.
- 3.3.5 The Human Resources Department will create a list of candidates eligible for appointment ranked from highest score to lowest score.
- 3.3.6 A preliminary interview will be conducted with the pool of top tier qualified candidates to determine which candidates will move forward in the hiring process. When possible, at least three candidates will be interviewed for each vacancy.
- 3.3.7 All candidates for interview must submit a completed employment application, resume and background information form, and sign an Authorization for Release of Information Form, and produce required documentation (e.g., Massachusetts driver's license, High School Diploma, Military record, etc.).
- 3.3.8 Omissions or deficiencies in the application materials may be used to disqualify a candidate. However, minor omissions or deficiencies on the form may be corrected prior to the interview process.
- 3.3.9 Candidates failing to complete the application or produce the required documentation within the required time frame will be disqualified from the selection process.

- 3.3.10 All candidates will be required to submit to a drug screen during the application process.
- 3.3.11 A thorough investigation of each candidate will be conducted. The investigation may include, but will not be limited to, the verification of a candidate's basic selection criteria and any additional credentials, a criminal history records check, Registry of Motor Vehicles checks, and an employment history check.
- 3.3.12 An interview will be conducted with each candidate who successfully passes the background investigation.
- 3.3.13 The same general questions will be asked of each candidate and their responses will be rated and recorded on a standardized form. Candidates may also be asked specific questions based on the information that was obtained during the background investigation, or the oral interview.
- 3.3.14 The Fire Chief shall make recommendation for selection from the list of eligible candidates based on the following criteria depending on the needs of the Department at the time of hire:
- Education
 - Military Service/Veteran Status
 - Family member of a firefighter killed in the line of duty
 - Special language proficiency/cultural competencies
 - Relationship to the Town of Needham
 - Prior public service, and
 - Prior firefighting/emergency medical service experience.

Upon the request of the Union, the Fire Chief will provide information as to the criteria that was used to make recommendations for hire.

- 3.3.15 All candidates who receive and accept a conditional offer of employment will undergo a psychological evaluation. A licensed psychologist and/or psychiatrist will conduct the psychological screening and the psychologist/psychiatrist will maintain any and all records or materials utilized or generated during the process. A summary recommendation will be prepared for the Town, which will be kept in a separate medical file and not in the employee's personnel file.
- 3.3.16 A physical examination will be conducted by a licensed physician. Medical records will be maintained and secured in accordance with the policy of the examining physician. A summary recommendation will be prepared for the Town, which will be kept in a separate medical file a not in the employee's personnel file.
- 3.3.17 Prior to being accepted to a Fire Academy, candidates must successfully complete the initial hire Physical Abilities Test (PAT), administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The PAT consists of events that require candidates to perform simulations of activities that are part of a firefighter's job.

- 3.3.18 The probationary period consists of one (1) year after successful completion of a Fire Academy. The probationary period for lateral transfers is one year from the date of hire, and for reinstatements one year from the date of rehire.
- 3.3.19 Maintenance of records and selection materials, including written test scores, background investigations forms and reports, medical and psychiatric evaluation summaries, and any other reports or ratings used in the selection process will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Department.
- 3.3.20 A full-time firefighter/EMT from any U.S. fire department with a minimum of two years full time experience in their agency may apply to join the department as a lateral transfer. If accepted as a transfer candidate, the examination restriction will be waived, but they will participate in all phases of the selection process and will be held in comparison within the current hiring pool.
- 3.3.21 A former Needham firefighter, who separated from the department in good standing and within the previous five years, may apply to join the department as a reinstatement. If accepted as a reinstatement candidate, the examination restriction will be waived, but they may be required to participate in all other phases of the selection process.