

FIRST RESPONDERS - FIRE DEPARTMENT FOLLOW UP Q&A



Monique Belair, Deputy Fire Chief, Oakville Fire Department

How competitive is firefighting?

A career in firefighting is extremely competitive and each municipal fire service has their own hiring criteria for minimum requirements. As a general rule most departments require candidates to complete a Pre-service program (certification for Firefighter I and II), a DZ license and obtain a valid First Aid and CPR certification as a minimum qualification.

What do you generally deal with on a daily basis?

There are many different divisions in the fire service, for firefighters they are emergency responders who based on the training and skills may deal with the following:

- High angle rescue
- Confined space
- Structure fires
- Grass fires
- Motor vehicle fires and/or collisions
- Trench rescue
- Ice, swift and surface water rescue
- Fire alarm calls
- General public service calls
- Public education activities/events
- Station tours

Is it true that most firefighters have second jobs?

Firefighters working 24 hour shifts are scheduled to work an average of 7 days per month. During their days off some are involved in their communities by volunteering, coaching sports, some are paramedics or volunteer firefighters in the community they live in and some who have another skill possibly from a previous career work on their days off.

How often do you find yourselves working with other emergency responder services?

Fire services interact with other emergency responders based on the type of call. For example we have what is referred to as a Tiered Medical Agreement with EMS and therefore based on the medical criteria will respond to persons in distress with a medical condition. We also partner with other emergency responders to promote safety within our community and charity events.

How do you cope with PTSD in your fields?

In the Halton Region, we have a First Responder Peer Group with trained personnel from all our agencies that are able to respond and assist with difficult or stressful incidents. The Town of Oakville has an EAP program to support our staff 24/7. We also have trained all our personnel in the Road to Mental Readiness training for first responders so that they are able to recognize the signs and symptoms of PTSD