

Module: Fire Service Orientation

Description

This module prepares students to understand the **history**, mission, organization, and roles within the fire service, **the evolution of firefighting techniques and equipment**, the importance of fire and life safety initiatives, and the roles of other agencies in supporting emergency response efforts. Understanding these concepts is **important because they instill a sense of pride in the professional heritage, provide lessons from past operations**, provide the foundation for effective teamwork, help reduce firefighter injuries and fatalities, and ensure a coordinated approach to protecting lives and property in their communities. This module helps new firefighters grasp their role within the fire service and the broader emergency response system **and strengthens their identity and connection to the fire service culture.**

Module Outcome

At the end of this module, the Firefighter I student will be able to describe the mission of the fire service, **the importance of firefighting history**, how the organization and structure within a fire department supports that mission, how the fire service tries to reduce Line-of-Duty Deaths (LODD), and how other agencies support the fire service in accomplishing its mission **by describing key historical milestones and their connection to the modern fire service and the various structures and efforts within the fire service designed to support the mission, the firefighters, and the community.**

Standards

This module aligns with applicable standards in:

- NFPA 1010 *Standard on Professional Qualifications for Firefighters* (2024)
- NFPA 1700 *Guide for Structural Fire Fighting* (2021)
- NFPA 1710 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* (2020)
- NFPA 1720 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments* (2020)

This module directly supports one Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) from NFPA 1010.

Table 1: Module Standards
NFPA 1010 (2024) Standard on Professional Qualifications for Firefighters
Chapter 6 — Firefighter I (NFPA 1001)

Standard	Requisite Knowledge or Skills
6.1.1 General Knowledge Requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization of the fire department; • the role of the Firefighter I in the organization; • the mission of fire service • the fire department’s standard operating procedures (SOPs) and rules and regulations as they apply to the Firefighter I • the value of fire and life safety initiatives in support of the fire department mission and to reduce firefighter line-of-duty injuries and fatalities • the role of other agencies as they relate to the fire department

The NFPA defines requisite knowledge and requisite skills as the minimum a student needs to know and be able to do in order to accomplish the task defined in the JPR.

Module Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, Firefighter I students will:

Table 2: Learning Objectives
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ID	Objective	Alignment
LO1	Describe the mission of fire service, given a lesson, so that protecting life and property is clearly explained.	6.1.1
LO2	Describe the organization of a fire department, given career, combination, and volunteer fire department organization charts, so that key roles are identified, the chain of command is recognized.	6.1.1
LO3	Describe the role of a new Firefighter, given entry-level firefighter duties and expectations, so that responsibilities and contribution to team and mission success are explained.	6.1.1
LO4	Describe where to find department procedures, rules, and regulations, given department manuals, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and standard operating guidelines (SOGs), so that the locations and use of guidance documents are identified.	6.1.1
LO5	Describe the value of fire and life safety initiatives, given examples of fire prevention programs, safety campaigns, and statistics on firefighter injuries and fatalities, so that the role of these initiatives in supporting the fire department’s mission and reducing risks to both firefighters and the public is explained.	6.1.1

Table 2: Learning Objectives
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ID	Objective	Alignment
LO6	Describe the role of other agencies involved in public safety, given descriptions of mutual aid agreements, inter-agency collaboration, and examples of joint emergency responses, so that the roles of other organizations, such as police, EMS, or utility companies, in supporting fire department operations are explained.	6.1.1
LO7	Describe key milestones in fire service history, given historical resources, so that connections between past developments and current practices are identified and the context of contemporary fire service operations is appreciated.	6.1.1

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this module. To be successful in this module, students will need to engage with the material and answer check-on-learning assessments.

Connections to Other Learning

Incident management systems are introduced in this module, including the concept of personnel accountability systems. PAS will be discussed in greater detail in the Communications module. Fire Service History supports other modules by providing context, foundational knowledge, and reinforcing key themes that are relevant across multiple areas of training.

Table 3: Connections to Supported Standards
NFPA 1010 (2024) Standard on Professional Qualifications for Firefighters
Chapter 6 — Firefighter I (NFPA 1001)

Standard	Requirement
<i>No supported standards.</i>	

Knowledge of the organization and structure of the fire service appears again when students come back for higher level training and education. Themes present in this module appear again in Firefighter II with the introduction of Fire and Life Safety Initiatives and Preparedness. and are integrated into the Fire Officer programs.

Boundaries of Instruction and Assessment

The study of fire service structure and organization is complex. As the saying goes, “if you’ve seen one fire department, you’ve seen one fire department.” Students entering into the fire service require a basic functional understanding of the fire service. They will use this knowledge to better understand their own department’s specific operational practices. Instructors should strive to provide students with a broad understanding that will help them integrate into their department.

The study of history can be deep and complex, especially when drawing lessons from historical events and applying them to modern contexts. Students entering into the fire service require a

basic appreciation for the history and traditions that inform modern firefighting practices. A more in-depth analysis of Fire Service History should be reserved for follow-on training.

Module Assessments

Table 4: Formative Assessments Module: Fire Service Orientation		
Description of Skill	Standard	Description of Assessment
Organization of the fire department	6.1.1	Cognitive assessments using multiple-choice, multiple selection, matching, or other assessment techniques.
Role of the Firefighter	6.1.1	
Mission of fire service	6.1.1	
How to find fire department (SOPs), rules, and regulations	6.1.1	
Value of fire and life safety initiatives	6.1.1	
Role of other agencies	6.1.1	

Table 5: Summative Assessments Module: Fire Service Orientation	
Standards Assessed	Description of Assessment
<i>No summative assessments.</i>	

Preparation, Materials, and Resources

Student Preparation

Students should review the relevant materials in their assigned textbook.

Instructor Preparation

- Read and annotate the associated chapter in the assigned textbook.
- Review the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives available at <https://everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives/>
- Review and annotate the associated lesson plans and standard evolutions for this module.

Materials and Resources

- None

Key Terms

- None

Revision History

The following table is provided as a quick reference.

Table 6: Revision History
Module: Fire Service Orientation

Revision Date	Revision Description
	First draft.

DRAFT

Module Outline

Module: Fire Service Orientation

Block 1: Online Learning

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Fire Service

(-- minutes)

Learning objectives

- LO1 Describe the mission of fire service
- LO5 Describe the value of fire and life safety initiatives
- LO7 Describe key milestones in fire service history

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Explain the purpose of the fire service. (LO1)
2. Explain the importance of ongoing training and physical fitness. (LO5)
3. Explain the importance of integrating lessons from critical incidents, LODD reports, and near miss reports into practice. (LO5)
4. Explain the importance of prevention efforts within the communities served. (LO5)
5. Identify the purpose of studying fire service history. (LO7)

▪ What is the Fire Service?

- The Mission: Protecting Life, Property, and the Environment
- Core Values: Courage, Honor, Integrity, Service, Duty, Respect

▪ Understanding the Role of Firefighters in Society

- Firefighters have always been a critical part of community safety and emergency response.
- The fire service has expanded beyond firefighting to include EMS, hazmat, technical rescue, and disaster response.
- Understanding Tradition and Culture
 - Firefighting is built on a strong sense of duty, honor, and tradition.
 - Many modern practices stem from historical experiences and lessons learned.
- Learning from Past Mistakes and Successes
 - Major fires have led to significant changes in tactics, equipment, and fire codes.
 - Understanding historical fire incidents helps prevent similar tragedies.
- Appreciating the Growth of Fire Safety and Prevention
 - Early firefighting was focused solely on suppression; today, prevention is key.

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- Fire codes, building regulations, and public education efforts have drastically reduced fire deaths

▪ The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

- Training & Fitness
 - 5 — Training & Certification
 - 6 — Medical & Physical Fitness
 - 7 — Research Agenda
 - 8 — Technology
 - 13 — Psychological Support
- Response & Risk Management
 - 1 — Cultural Change
 - 2 — Accountability
 - 3 — Risk Management
 - 4 — Empowerment
 - 9 — Fatality, Near-Miss Investigation
 - 11 — Response Policies
 - 12 — Violent Incident Response
 - 16 — Apparatus Design & Safety
- Community & Prevention
 - 10 — Grant Support
 - 14 — Public Education
 - 15 — Code Enforcement & Sprinklers

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Block 1: Online Learning

Lesson 2: Early Firefighting in America (1600-1700s)

(-- minutes)

Learning objectives

- LO1** Describe the mission of fire service
- LO2** Describe the organization of a fire department
- LO7** Describe key milestones in fire service history

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Identify the sources of authority that govern fire departments. (LO1)
2. Compare the different types of fire departments. (LO2)
3. Describe the early development of the American fire service. (LO7)

▪ Fire Risks in the American Colonies

- Wooden structures and thatched roofs created highly flammable conditions.

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- Open flame cooking and heating (fireplaces, candles, and lanterns) increased fire hazards.
- Close proximity of buildings in early towns allowed fire to spread quickly.
- Limited firefighting resources meant that once a fire started, it often resulted in widespread destruction.
- The first fire prevention laws
- settlements passed laws to reduce hazards
- Boston banned thatched roofs and wooden chimneys (1631)
- New Amsterdam (later New York City) required chimneys to be swept regularly (1648)
- Philadelphia required fire buckets in every home for community firefighting (1676)
- Reference Response & Risk Management Life Safety initiatives drawing correlations between these practices and modern day ones
- **Volunteer Fire Companies: Benjamin Franklin and the Union Fire Company (1736)**
 - Franklin, inspired by fire brigades in London, established America's first organized volunteer fire company in Philadelphia.
 - Members were required to supply their own equipment
- **Early Equipment and Firefighting Methods**
 - Bucket Brigades. Citizens formed human chains to pass buckets of water from wells or rivers to the fire.
 - Hand-Pumped Fire Engines. By the late 1600s, basic fire pumps were used in some cities (imported from Europe).
 - Hooks and Ladders. Firefighters used long hooks to pull down burning structures and stop fire spread.
 - Leather Water Buckets. Standard equipment for citizens and firefighters before hoses became common.
 - Focused on prevention, firefighting, and community safety rather than just reacting to fires
 - Led to the establishment of similar companies in other cities
- **Lesson Learned: Fire Department Structure**
 - Role of citizens in early fire suppression
 - Most fire protection was based on a community effort, with bucket brigades formed to pass water from wells to fires.

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- Wealthier citizens sometimes sponsored private fire brigades to protect their properties.
- Reference how this created the basis for the structure of our fire departments today and reflects some firefighter functions
- Structure
- Governance
- Types of Fire Department
 - Career or Full-Time
 - Combination
 - Call or Volunteer
- Functions
 - Response to Fire Alarms
 - Community Risk Reduction (CRR)

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Block 1: Online Learning

Lesson 3: The Growth of Urban Fire Departments (1800s)

(-- minutes)

Learning objectives

LO2 Describe the organization of a fire department

LO7 Describe key milestones in fire service history

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Explain the governance of a fire department. (LO2)
2. Describe the growth of firefighting as a public safety function. (LO7)

▪ Early Equipment and Techniques

- Leather buckets, hand-pumped engines, fire hooks, and ladders
- Introduction of horse-drawn fire engines
- Fire hydrants and water mains
- Fire Insurance and the Rise of Fire Companies
- Fire marks and private fire brigades
- Competition between companies for fires and payments

▪ Transition to Municipal Fire Departments

- End of the volunteer era in major cities
- Establishment of paid fire departments
 - Firefighters as municipal employees serving the citizens

▪ Fires That Changed Firefighting

- The Great New York City Fire (1835)

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- Destroyed 17 city blocks, including the financial district; 600+ buildings burned
- Led to the creation of the Croton Aqueduct (1842) to supply water to hydrants
- The Great Chicago Fire (1871)
 - 3.3 square miles burned, 300 deaths, 100,000 people left homeless
 - Emphasized the importance of fire-resistant building materials (shift to brick and stone) and led to the development of stricter fire codes for urban planning
- The Boston Fire (1872)
 - 776 buildings destroyed, \$75 million in damages
 - Led to standardization of fire hydrants and hose couplings for interoperability
 - How NH firefighters helped through duty and courage in the Great Boston Fire
- The Brooklyn Theatre Fire (1876)
 - 278 people died in a crowded theater
 - Fire exits and marked escape routes became mandatory along with occupancy limits for Public spaces

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Lesson 4: Professionalization and Standardization (late 1800-1900s)

(-- minutes)

Learning objectives

- LO1** Describe the mission of fire service
- LO2** Describe the organization of a fire department
- LO4** Describe where to find department procedures, rules, and regulations
- LO5** Describe the value of fire and life safety initiatives
- LO6** Describe the role of other agencies involved in public safety
- LO7** Describe key milestones in fire service history

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Describe how the fire department's mission guides its operations. (LO1)
2. Describe the common functions of a fire department. (LO2)
3. Identify the different types and roles of fire companies. (LO2)
4. Describe the importance of ongoing training. (LO2)
5. Differentiate between the roles of Firefighter I and Firefighter II. (LO3)
6. Explain the importance of following standard operating procedures (SOPs) and department policies. (LO3)
7. Explain the career progression of a firefighter. (LO3)
8. Identify the fire department chain of command. (LO3)
9. Describe the importance of following department procedures during fire department operations. (LO4)
10. Explain how firefighters can seek clarification on policies, procedures, and guidelines when needed. (LO4)
11. Explain the importance of integrating lessons from critical incidents into practice. (LO5)
12. Describe the creation of FSTEMS (LO6)
13. Identify the factors leading to firefighting becoming a profession. (LO7)

▪ **Advancements in Apparatus and Equipment**

- The Late 1800-1900s provided many advancements in Fire Apparatus and Equipment
 - Steam-powered fire engines
 - Introduction of motorized fire engines (early 1900s)
 - Two-way radios and improved communications
 - Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
- Formation of Federal and National Organizations
 - NFPA established in (1896)
 - Standardized fire codes and prevention
 - Brought us our modern day standards and evidence-based recommendations
 - Used to develop state and local codes, ordinances, policies, SOPs and SOGs

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- The firefighter must follow departmental SOPs and SOGs and seek clarification from their chain of command
- Creation of the U.S. Forest Service fire crews (1939)
- NIOSH, under the CDC, begins Investigating Fire Fighter fatalities (1998)
- Firefighter Unions and Labor Movements
 - Formation of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
 - Improvements in working conditions and safety
- Establishment of New Hampshire Fire Training (1961)
 - First Firefighter course held at UNH (1963)
 - Creation of Division of Fire Standards and Training & EMS in (1989)
 - Construction of the Fire Academy in 1995
- **America Burning (1973) and the Evolving Role of Firefighters**
 - Expansion into HazMat, and technical rescue (All Hazards)
 - EMS
 - Community risk reduction and fire prevention programs
- **The Professional Firefighter**
 - Roles
 - Based on NFPA professional qualification standards established in 1971
 - Firefighter I
 - Operates under direct supervision
 - Firefighter II
 - Operates under general supervision
 - Responsibilities
 - Probationary Firefighter
 - Career Progression
 - The Fire Officer
 - Chain of Command
 - Company Officer
 - Battalion or District Chief
 - Deputy or Assistant Chief
 - Fire Chief
 - Other Personnel
 - Fire Marshall
 - Fire Commissioner
- **Firefighting Companies**
 - Engine Company

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- Ladder or Truck Company
- Rescue or Squad Company
- EMS Company
- **Fires That Changed Firefighting**
 - The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911)
 - 146 garment workers died, mostly young women.
 - Introduction of fire safety laws in workplaces, including fire drills and sprinkler systems.
 - The Cocoanut Grove Fire (1942)
 - 492 deaths, deadliest nightclub fire in U.S. history
 - Led to a ban on flammable decorations in public venues and installation of emergency push-bar doors
 - The Texas City Disaster (1947)
 - 581 deaths due to explosion and fire from ammonium nitrate cargo
 - Led to hazardous materials regulations and the development of HazMat firefighting training
 - Beverly Hills Supper Club Fire (1977)
 - 165 deaths in a crowded nightclub
 - Strengthened occupancy limits for public venues

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Block 1: Online Learning

Lesson 5: The Modern Fire Service (2000s)

(-- minutes)

Learning objectives

LO6 Describe the role of other agencies involved in public safety

LO7 Describe key milestones in fire service history

Enabling Learning Objectives

1. Explain the purpose of an Incident Management System (IMS). (LO6)
2. Describe the purpose of mutual aid plans and agreements in ensuring adequate resources during emergencies. (LO6)
3. Describe the roles of other public safety organization in emergency response (LO6)
4. Describe the role of disaster relief organizations in emergency response and recovery. (LO6)
5. Describe the challenges faced by modern firefighters. (LO7)

▪ **New Challenges and Responses**

- Terrorism and WMD response (post-9/11 impacts)

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- Changes in material science and building construction
- **Establishment of Incident Management Systems**
 - Why these systems developed
 - Personnel Accountability Systems
 - Where the firefighter exists in the IMS
 - How to operate in the IMS
 - Accountability systems
 - Duties and responsibilities based on location within the command structure
 - Mutual Aid Plans and Agreements
 - Other Public Safety Organizations
 - Law Enforcement
 - EMS
 - Utility Companies
 - Disaster Relief Organizations
 - FEMA
 - American Red Cross
- **Notable Fires That Changed Firefighting**
 - The Worcester Cold Storage Fire (1999)
 - Six firefighters died after becoming disoriented inside an abandoned building.
 - Development and implementation of Personal Accountability Systems and training on survival skills for firefighters.
 - The Station Nightclub Fire (2003)
 - 100 deaths and over 200 injuries after a pyrotechnics display ignited flammable soundproofing foam
 - Lessons
 - The Los Angeles Wildfires (2025)
 - Severe wildfires resulted in 29 fatalities and the destruction of 16,000 structures, with estimated insured losses between \$28 billion and \$75 billion.
 - Emphasized the need for robust disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation efforts.
- **Conclusion**
 - The fire service's core mission: Protecting life, property, and the environment
 - How history informs future advancements
 - The importance of continuing education and professional development