

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT *of* FIRE PROGRAMS



HIGH SCHOOL BASED FIREFIGHTER I AND II EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS GUIDELINES

**A Resource Guide Developed Jointly Between
Virginia Department of Fire Programs
Virginia Department of Education**

Preface: This document was developed through a joint effort of the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VD FP) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to provide guidance to local school systems in establishing consistent standards for the delivery of Firefighter I and Firefighter II programs. The recommendations herein were derived from the vast experience of instructors currently delivering the Firefighter I and Firefighter II program to high school students.

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to establish guidelines that ensure quality and consistency in Firefighter I and II program delivery offered in high schools throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

This course is for students enrolled in the Firefighter program ONLY! Instructors ARE NOT PERMITTED to include students not enrolled in the firefighter program in any portion of the course.

Scope: This document is to provide the foundation for establishing and conducting a Firefighter I and II training program within the high school setting in accordance with the regulations set forth by the VDFP and the VDOE. All Firefighter I and II courses must be conducted in accordance with VDFP's Instructor Manual and the NFPA 1001-10 and 1001-20 requirements. This document will outline the requirements for course length, instructor and student selection criteria, student/parent information, textbook selection and other curriculum information, testing requirements, and equipment requirements.

Mandatory Requirements: *The Firefighter I and II courses are for students enrolled in the Firefighter program ONLY! Instructors ARE NOT PERMITTED to include students not enrolled in the program in any portion of this course.*

The following activities involving firefighter training are prohibited:

1. Minors 16 and 17 years of age shall not enter a burning structure, unless the junior firefighters have met the four conditions listed below:
 - i. All Virginia local jurisdictions shall have adopted an ordinance consistent with Virginia section code § 40.1-79.1.
 - ii. The Junior Firefighter shall reside in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Evidence of residency shall be provided by the junior firefighter the first day of class.
 - iii. The Junior Firefighter shall present an original letter (not a copy) of parental or legal guardian consent that permits Junior Firefighter participation as well as a completed and signed VDFP Parental Notification Form (not a copy) on the first day of class.
 - iv. The Junior Firefighter shall have a copy of the locality/department current liability insurance for Junior Firefighters, if affiliated with a locality/fire department – **or** – if not affiliated a fire department, provide proof of insurance (personal) on the first day of class.
2. **Minors, 15 years of age and under are prohibited from engaging in any training activities sponsored by VDFP, in conjunction with the Code of Virginia 40.1-79.1**

Instructors shall check a student's identification ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS to ensure compliance with this policy before student may participate in any VDFP training

program(s).

Junior Firefighters attending additional VDFP training shall meet the above policy and be certified NFPA 1001-10 – Firefighter Level I in order to progress in VDFP training. All documentation will be submitted to, and retained by, VDFP or authorized instructor prior to commencement of training.

Code of Virginia: Virginia Code § 40.1-79.1 pertains to exemptions from chapter generally; local ordinance authorizing participation in volunteer fire company activities.

A. Any county, city or town may authorize by ordinance any person residing anywhere in the Commonwealth, aged 16 years or older, who is a member of a volunteer fire company within such county, city, or town with parental or guardian approval, (i) to seek certification under National Fire Protection Association 1001, level one, firefighter standards, as administered by the Department of Fire Programs; and (ii) to work with or participate fully in all activities of such volunteer fire company, provided such person has attained certification under National Fire Protection Association 1001, level one, firefighter standards, as administered by the Department of Fire Programs.

B. Any trainer or instructor of such persons mentioned in subsection A of this section and any member of a paid or volunteer fire company who supervises any such persons shall be exempt from the provisions of § [40.1-103](#), provided that the provisions of § [40.1-100](#) have not been violated, when engaged in activities of a volunteer fire company, and provided that the volunteer fire company or the governing body of such county, city or town has purchased insurance which provides coverage for injuries to or the death of such persons in their performance of activities under this section.

(1982, c. 344; 1983, c. 123; 1991, c. 511; 2005, c. 151.)

Virginia Code § 40.1-79.1 is available at the following link:
<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+40.1-79.01>

Course Length: The course length will allow for up to 36 weeks of student and instructor contact in a classroom setting and hands-on environment, taught by a VDFP qualified instructor. This course shall meet VDFP and NFPA 1001 standards. The course length must take into consideration requirements for other school activities (i.e., assemblies, field trips, required testing, etc.). The ratio for practical skills testing must be maintained at a 5:1 student/instructor ratio for high risk scenarios. For moderate risk training activities, a student/instructor ratio shall not exceed 10:1. These testing ratios could also increase the time required to complete the course of study if sufficient additional instructors are not available. A complete copy of the Conduct of High Risk Training Activities requirements and guidelines can be obtained at:
http://www.vafire.com/training/Instructor_Manual/IMsection_5.pdf.

In order to receive verified credit a student must earn Virginia certification. To receive Virginia certification, a student must complete the Virginia Department of Fire Programs' state certification program (which includes passing VDFP's written and skills tests).

Instructor/Coordinator Selection: The Instructor for this program must possess and maintain a current VDFP Instructor certification in accordance with the current NFPA 1041

requirements. Additionally, an instructor must possess any VDOE, school division or Virginia Community College System teaching requirements, pursuant to teaching Firefighting I and II.

Student Selection Criteria: Due to the nature of the firefighter course material (written and practical skills testing) and the stresses the student will be exposed to, it is imperative that students and parents be aware of the nature of the course. All students enrolled in the firefighter course **must be at least 16 years of age at the start date of the program and meet all requirements as specified in the current NFPA 1001-10 and 1001-20.** All students less than 18 years old at the start of the course must have a signed VDFP Parental Consent Form¹ on file prior to the start of the course. Students enrolled in this course will be required to complete practical skills training and will be exposed to physical and mental stresses above those normally experienced in a high school setting. In order to receive Virginia certification, there may be a requirement for after-school or weekend hours to complete practical skills training. To ensure that prospective students and parents are informed and understand the nature of this course, an informational packet outlining the course requirements shall be given to each prospective student/parent for review prior to the student being enrolled in the course. The information packet should include at a minimum the following:

1. Letter from School and/or Letter from Course Coordinator or Department
2. Parental Notification form from Course Coordinator
3. Parental Approval Form from School
4. Current Description of the NFPA 1001-10 and 1001-20
5. Prerequisites for Firefighter I and II Training (Appendix A)
6. VDFP Parental Consent Form
7. Course Syllabus
8. Checklist of required forms needing signature
9. Ordinance from the jurisdiction permitting junior firefighters
10. Proof of Insurance
11. Additional locality-required forms or letters

It is imperative that guidance counselors/career coaches, students and parents/legal guardians understand the requirements and nature of the course prior to enrolling students. It is highly recommended that each student's reading comprehension be tested and the coordinator and school system establish reading levels acceptable for the course. Students with disabilities who are admitted to the program shall have an individualized education plan (IEP). The coordinator of the Firefighter I and II program may meet with the special education committee to develop the IEP. Please note that the **Hazardous Material Awareness and Hazardous Material Operations tests shall not be read orally to any student.** A student must obtain Hazardous Material Awareness certification in order to receive the Firefighter I certification and Hazardous Material Operations certification in order to receive the Firefighter II certification.

Parental Consent Form: Students aged 16 or 17 and enrolled in the Firefighter I and/or Firefighter II course shall present a completed and signed VDFP Parental Consent Form to the lead instructor the first day of class. A failure to present the VDFP Parental Consent form will forfeit a student's eligibility to participate in the VDFP sponsored course.

¹A copy of the VDFP Parental Consent Form is available at:
http://www.vafire.com/State_Forms/ParentalConsentform021307.pdf

Curriculum: The Firefighter I and II course is to be taught in accordance with the current NFPA 1001-10 and 1001-20 standards as adopted by VDFP. It is important that the textbook utilized in the course be of a reading level comparable with the students' level. Additionally, a student is required to pass the Hazardous Material Awareness, as well as CPR and First Aid courses, in order to receive the Firefighter I certification. Similarly, a student must pass the Hazardous Material Operations course in order to receive the Firefighter II certification.

For a complete description of the Firefighter I and II and Hazardous Material Awareness and Operations courses, please visit the following link:

http://www.vafire.com/fire_chat/2006%20Course%20Catalog.pdf

School Testing Requirements: Testing requirements to receive school credit are established by the school system and the course coordinator. A student must maintain a grade of "C" or higher to remain eligible for dual enrollment high school programs.

Certification Testing Requirements: To receive a Virginia Certificate a student must pass the VDFP written and practical skills tests as well as satisfy the attendance requirements for each course. A 100% attendance record is required for all VDFP certification courses. A student is required to make up all missed time with a VDFP instructor. *A student absent more than 10% of the course shall not be eligible for VDFP certification.*

It is also required that a student pass the Hazardous Material Awareness, as well as CPR and First Aid courses, to receive the Firefighter I certification. In addition, a student must pass the Hazardous Material Operations course in order to receive the Firefighter II certification.

For a complete copy of the Professional Certification Procedures required by the VDFP, please visit the following link:

http://www.vafire.com/training/Instructor_Manual/IMsection_6_revised_070104.pdf

Equipment Requirements: The minimum required equipment has been set by VDFP and the instructors to facilitate Firefighting I and II. It is imperative that a minimum set of equipment be available for each student group while maintaining a 5:1 student-to-instructor ratio. A list of minimum equipment requirements for a Firefighter I and II program are available at the following link: www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CTE/regulations/trade.pdf.

School divisions will be reimbursed 100 percent for local equipment expenditures claimed, up to the approved state funds allocation amount. School divisions must first use their entire state equipment allocation before using any Perkins federal equipment funds (Supts. Memo No. 143, July 27, 2007). To review the full memo, visit:

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/suptsmemos/2007/inf143.html>

Please note that a locality may require additional equipment in order to facilitate the Firefighter I and II courses. Such request for approval to use state funds should be sent to the VDOE Trade and Industrial Education Specialist.

General Recommendations: It is strongly recommended that the Course Coordinator hold a prospective student parents/guardian conference prior to the student's enrollment in a firefighting course. If this conference cannot be scheduled before enrollment, it is recommended

that one be held prior to the start of the first class. During this conference, the Coordinator should ensure the parents/guardian and prospective student are, at a minimum, fully aware of and understand the following course information:

- Physical and mental requirements of the firefighting course
- Various levels of risk associated with the required tasks for completion
- Virginia Code 40.1-79.1, 40.1-100, and 40.1-103 as they pertain to the courses
- Minimum grade requirements for high school and dual enrollment college course
- Minimum grade and skill completion requirement for state firefighter certification (if applicable)
- Specific student insurance requirements
- Field trip and practical skills activity requirements
- Attendance requirements
- Personal equipment needs, if not provided by locality
- Explanation of interactive class participation and possible physical contact between students in a teamwork setting

Dual Enrollment: It is recommended that each school system offering a firefighter program look into the possibility of entering into a dual enrollment agreement with its local community college. Several high school firefighter programs in the Commonwealth are currently operating under this type of agreement with positive outcomes for both the educational institutions and the students. Broadly speaking, dual enrollment allows high school students to meet the requirements for high school graduation while simultaneously earning college credit. All of VDFP certification courses are accredited by the American Council on Education (ACE). The Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment established on January 28, 2005 provides a statewide framework for dual enrollment arrangements between public schools and community colleges. These arrangements may be made at the local level, i.e., between the representatives or boards of the participating public school and the participating community college authorized to contract such arrangements. These arrangements may be formed in three distinct ways.

- 1) High school students may be enrolled in the regularly scheduled college credit courses with other college students taught at the community college.
- 2) High school students may be enrolled in specially scheduled college credit courses exclusively for high school students taught at the high school facility.
- 3) High school students may be enrolled in specially scheduled college credit courses exclusively for high school students taught at the community college.

In the latter two cases where the college credit courses are specially scheduled for the high school students, these courses shall have the same academic rigor as, and meet all of the college accreditation standards of, the regularly scheduled college credit courses. In all cases, the particular courses to be offered shall be determined through the mutual agreement of the participating public school and community college.

The purpose of the Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment is to provide a wider range of course options for high school students in academic and career/technical subject areas where appropriate. As such, the plan promotes rigorous educational pursuits and encourages learning as a lifelong process. The plan also offers a direct cost benefit to the Commonwealth of Virginia, especially as it avoids unnecessary duplication of facilities and equipment when the students receive credit towards a postsecondary credential while enrolled in high school.

All high school students are eligible to participate in a dual enrollment agreement between the high school and community college. However, appropriate high school and community college officials should take the necessary steps to assure that every student who is registered under the dual enrollment agreement is adequately prepared for the demands of a college level course and can benefit from the enrichment opportunity.

The Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment complies with the criteria of the Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS) and with the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. Some localities may have similar agreements with private high schools or private colleges. Course Coordinators in those locations should consult with the appropriate local school officials to see if such an agreement exists or if one may be implemented.

The Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment may be viewed at the following link:
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/suptsmemos/2005/inf073.html>

APPENDIX A

PREREQUISITES FOR FIREFIGHTER COURSES

To be eligible to attend a Firefighter I or Firefighter II course in Virginia, you must meet the following prerequisites:

- A. Be proficient in reading, writing, and speaking the English language.
- B. Be a minimum of 16 years of age at the beginning date of this certification program.
 - √ If less than 18 years of age, on the first day of class the student must provide the course coordinator with a completed VDFP Parental/Legal Guardian Permission Form with the signature of a parent or guardian verifying approval for enrollment in the course.
- C. Provide proof of insurance the first day of class.
 - √ If you are less than 18 years of age and affiliated with a fire organization, you must provide the Course Coordinator with documentation from an Officer of the agency or responsible party *stating that you will be covered by the agency/organization's insurance while attending the course.*
 - OR -
 - √ If you are less than 18 years of age and *not* affiliated with a fire organization, you must provide the Course Coordinator with *Proof of Insurance (personal)*.
- D. If seeking Virginia Certification, you *must be able* to perform all practical skills required for that level of certification including the ability to function and communicate independently and perform without the need for an assistant. Students with disabilities will be evaluated on a case by case basis for course entry and safety considerations.
- E. If seeking Virginia Certification, you shall complete all course requirements, including attendance and participation requirements as well as the following:
 - √ Firefighter I: Complete an Office of EMS-approved course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid course, as well as complete and pass the Hazardous Material Awareness course.
 - √ Firefighter II: Complete and pass the Hazardous Material Operations course.
- F. Be clean and neat in appearance and abide by all clothing and appearance requirements set forth by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, the locality, and the school.
 - √ Students who have facial hair that will prevent the face piece from achieving a proper seal will not be allowed to participate in any part of the evolution requiring the use of an SCBA. Section 5-3.8 of NFPA 1500, Fire Department Occupational Health and Safety, states, "A growth of beard or facial hair at any point where the SCBA face piece is designed to seal with the face shall be prohibited for members required to use SCBA." The use of an SCBA face piece by an individual with facial hair is in violation of [OSHA] 29 CFR 1910.134(e)(5)(i).
 - √ All students, instructors, and safety personnel shall properly wear all protective clothing and equipment whenever they are involved in any evolution of fire suppression operation during live fire training evolutions.
- G. Not be under the influence of any drugs or intoxicating substances that impair your ability to participate in practical skills or operate a motor vehicle.

Acknowledgement - I have read the above requirements and verify that I am capable of meeting all requirements listed above and I am eligible to participate in the Firefighter I and Firefighter II course. My signature below

acknowledges that I have read and understand the prerequisites for course enrollment and verify that I am eligible for certification, based upon the “Standards of Conduct” required for course completion.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (please print full name): _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

APPENDIX B

PARENT/STUDENT INFORMATION PACKET

In order to participate in a VDFP training program, all students age 16 and 17 shall complete the VDFP Parental/Guardian Consent Form and provide it to their instructor the first day of class. A failure to present the Parental Consent Form will forfeit a student's right to participate in the course.

A copy of the VDFP Parental/Guardian Consent Form² is available at the following link:
http://www.vafire.com/State_Forms/ParentalConsentform021307.pdf.

²The Parental/Guardian Consent Form may not be changed or revised by the locality or school under any circumstances.

NOTE: These forms do not replace the forms that are required for completion by the Course Coordinator at the start of the course.

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

Your son/daughter _____ (student name) is enrolled in the Firefighter I and II program at [insert your school]. This program is an elective course of study that your son/daughter has chosen. As with many courses dealing with public safety, there are certain risks associated with participation in this course. Enclosed you will find information concerning the curriculum and numerous documents that require your signature. Upon your review of all enclosed documents, please review the material with your child and sign your name, where appropriate. All required documentation should be received no later than [insert your date] in the office located at [insert your location]. If you have any concerns, please discuss them with your daughter/son, the instructor, or someone at the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (1-866-4VAFIRE).

The firefighter program is challenging both physically and mentally. Regular attendance is required for your child to succeed. Equally important is that your child must come to class prepared. Please discuss these issues with your child to ensure he or she is prepared to undertake the responsibility of fulfilling the requirements necessary for successful completion of this course.

The Firefighter I course is a program that trains individuals in the methods and techniques associated with fire suppression. The curriculum used in Virginia is a nationally recognized program developed by the NFBPSQ. The curriculum requires a minimum number of hours of classroom instruction for its firefighter programs and additional hours for practical skills. Passing both the written and practical aspects of the state examination certifies the student to perform the duties of a firefighter. Because of the responsibilities placed on a firefighter, the Commonwealth of Virginia requires that anyone less than eighteen (18) years of age must have permission from his or her parent or legal guardian to become certified as a firefighter in Virginia. Students participating in the course must be at least sixteen (16) years of age before enrollment begins for the Firefighter program. Specifically, the student must be age 16 on the first day of the course. Please note that, in order to participate in the Junior Firefighter program, a student shall provide a copy of the locality/department current liability insurance for Junior Firefighters (if affiliated to a locality or fire department) or provide proof of insurance (personal). A student less than 18 years of age must provide a completed and signed copy of the VDFP Parental Consent Form to the instructor on the first day of class.

Participation in the field of firefighting can be a very rewarding experience. However, the responsibilities of a firefighter are great and at times extremely stressful. The consequences of such situations can be positive; but they can also be a source of frustration, guilt, and emotional distress. Physical injury is a very real possibility. Firefighters can also be at a greater risk of exposure to hazardous environments. Firefighter training programs provide information on how to protect oneself when dealing with these hazards. However, the nature of firefighting activities tends to place firefighters in dangerous situations where the maturity and experience to make critical decisions is of the utmost importance.

By signing this document, you agree that your daughter/son has the capabilities for managing these mature matters.

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

RELATIONSHIP TO APPLICANT: _____

Note: This letter may be changed or revised as needed by the locality.