



## What You Need to Know About Being a Nottawa-Sherman Firefighter

Much of what you read below will seem like we are trying to discourage you from being a firefighter. This is not our intent. We simply want you to know that making the commitment to be a firefighter is a serious decision that will change your life style... and your life. Personal sacrifices will be extensive for you and your family.

Our fire department is not a club. We do have a few social activities, but we don't exist for them. We exist to serve our community.

In the course of performing our duties, we frequently operate in dangerous environments. You will be well trained and well equipped, but **you need to know that this is not a risk free job.**

### Reality Check

- We are a 24 hour, 7 days a week emergency service. Life as you know it now will be history;
- Our duties often involve dangerous environments;
- Our duties require a lot of personal sacrifice on our part and on the part of our family members;
- We are paid per event, not by the hour, and we're paid a lump sum only once a year. Annually, we average 360-420 runs, 30-40 meetings & 4-6 special events. Because it's nearly impossible to make all of the runs, your annual paycheck will probably be less than \$2,000;
- Many events (parades, community service presentations, initial training classes, etc.) are unpaid duties;
- Our department has a "zero tolerance" for alcohol policy. If you consume alcoholic beverages often, you will be of little use to the department;
- You will often suffer from sleep deprivation and miss out on family events;
- Many of your meals and home projects will be interrupted;
- You will sometimes have to leave your almost full shopping cart in the aisle;
- You will miss some of your favorite TV programs;
- **Most important**, you will provide help to hundreds of your fellow community members during some of the worst days of their lives.

### Requirements:

#### You must ...

- be 18 years old or older, have a valid driver's license and submit to a criminal background check;
- be in good health and submit to drug testing and a physician's examination, if required;
- have average to excellent physical strength and mobility;
- be willing to attend **about 350 hours** of classes (2-3 nights a week and a few full Saturdays) for 8-10 months in order to become a certified firefighter and a licensed Medical First Responder. **This is unpaid, personal time** and will involve transportation costs which are not reimbursed;
- be able learn new information and skills & pass extensive written and practical tests mandated by the State;
- be able stay calm, conscious and functional in the presence of blood, torn flesh, mangled body parts, dead bodies and screaming patients;
- be able to work in extremely hot & extremely cold weather while wearing 40-50 lbs of gear;
- be willing to seriously restrict your consumption of alcoholic beverages;

You may not have a felony record, a poor driving record or other serious problems with obeying laws, have a beard, be severely claustrophobic or have a strong fear of heights.

### Your Family

You **ABSOLUTELY MUST** consult with your family regarding all of the obligations and expectations detailed in this document. If your spouse, or significant other does not read this information, understand the commitment you are about to undertake and agree to the tremendous demands it will place on your family, **we can almost guarantee that troubles will follow.**

*If you have read everything on this page and are still interested, see the other side or visit our Web site [nsfd.net](http://nsfd.net).*

## Priorities

If you are not willing to get out of bed at 3 a.m. in the morning to go help someone you don't even know, or if you won't be able to tear yourself away from a World Series game, a championship game involving your favorite NFL team or a NASCAR race, please do not fill out an application.

For fires and accidents, you will be on call 24/7-365. You will be expected to respond while attending most family gatherings, while you are eating meals, while you are watching movies, during your normal sleeping hours and all sorts of other "inconvenient" times. There are a few exceptions (e.g., funerals, weddings, serious illness, working your regular job, in class, out of pager range). The rest of us expect you to show up when we're paged out, if at all possible. Your failure to respond will make things harder for the rest of us and could very well put our safety or our lives in greater danger.

## More Legalities

Your record: If you have had difficulty with obeying laws or have had confrontations with law enforcement officers, you may have a hard time at your interview with the NSFD Executive Board.

Your health: The Michigan State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Fire Services, Office of Fire Fighter Training states that, "...unless you have written approval of a physician, [you should not participate in firefighter training if you have a heart condition, respiratory condition, other physical condition or are pregnant](#)".

## The Pay

Meetings, paid special events & runs that involve only our light rescue rig (medicals, medical alerts) are paid at the rate of \$16/event. Many medical events involve an hour of your time if an ambulance is nearby. Some medicals involve hours of our time.

Events involving the use of any fire fighting apparatus (fires, gas odors, carbon monoxide runs, accidents, downed power lines, etc.) are paid at the rate of \$18/event. On a 6-hour event, you will be making \$3/hr.

Transportation costs and clothing replacement costs are not reimbursed for any fire department activity. If you live a long distance from the station, your "take home pay" will be even less. Depending on how your tax preparer interprets the tax laws, you may be able to deduct mileage and equipment.

"Fringe benefits" include a very modest retirement fund based on your earned wages, a free hepatitis B immunization, an annual "all-you-can-eat" steak fry (for members, retired members & spouses only) and use of our station to perform minor maintenance on your vehicles. Depending on your carrier, you may be able to get a significant discount on your cell phone bill.

## Sometimes It's Really Hard

Some mornings you will go to your regular job with only an hour or two (or less) sleep. After a fire run we have to clean hoses, refill breathing air tanks & water tanks, service our SCBAs (air packs) and fix anything that is broken. We have to do it right then; even if it's at 3 a.m. These tasks cannot be postponed because we've often been paged out again before we even leave the station.

On some medical runs, accident scenes and fires, you will see things that will be emotionally disturbing. Sooner or later, you will work on a victim or patient who is a friend or relative. Your training will not do much to prepare you for the emotional stress of those incidents. Most of us have been there and we will help you through it.

## If You Decide to Join Us

Once you have been accepted by the rest of the crew and once we know you are as committed to serving the public as we are, **you will be part of one of the most honorable and proudest professions in the world.** You will be part of a brotherhood/sisterhood that has no equal outside of our elite military forces. **The absolute best parts:** You will have many new friends that you can, and will, trust with your life. You will also have the immense satisfaction of helping people in our community and neighboring communities when their day turns bad.