

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS  
VIRGINIA FIRE MARSHAL ACADEMY**

**CIVILIAN ENTRY**  
for  
**VFMA Schools**



**INFORMATION AND STUDY GUIDE**

Perquisite testing for Inspections, Investigations and Public and Life Safety Educator  
Certification courses.

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## **Civilian Entry for Virginia Fire Marshal Academy**

### **What is Civilian Entry?**

NFPA prevention standards (1031 & 1033) have a fundamental system that requires an individual entering Investigation or inspection training to have a minimum of Firefighter II certification as a prerequisite. This was good in concept but failed to recognize the real world where people from outside the fire service were entering the prevention field from a career path other than the fire service.

For this reason we have created a system to allow those without firefighter certification an avenue to enter any fire inspections, public education or investigator level course. This prerequisite process is labeled Civilian Entry.

### **Why do we have the Civilian Entry process as a prerequisite?**

As with all technical training each student must have a fundamental level of knowledge before entering the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy classroom. This basic information is to serve as a foundation from which to build a higher path of knowledge and skills in the Fire Marshal field.

All national standards for Fire Marshal type courses start with the premise that each individual has a basic knowledge in areas such as fire behavior, sprinkler systems and building construction. For this reason some students without firefighter training were lost on the first day of an Academy class. In the past we taught firefighter level information on the first few days of class to assist those individuals. But with 93% of the class being certified in the firefighting field, this proved to be burdensome and counter productive. Most importantly, a one day presentation did not assure that the individual absorbed and retained this needed knowledge. It left no room for individuals to read or comprehend some of the basic fire behavior principles.

### **Solution**

We had to find an effective way to assure that each student entering a Fire Marshal Academy course had a basic foundation of fire knowledge. The first way of assuring this is to accept those students with Firefighter II certification. These students who are certified firefighters have already demonstrated through a testing process that they have the basic knowledge.

The second process is to set up a simple plan where those individuals with self study skills could review a text and take a written examination. This document highlights specific chapters for those individuals to study before taking the Civilian Entry Examination. The exam consists of the same questions from those specific fields used in the Firefighter certification process. To support this effort it is understood that all graduates must have skills necessary to review a document, glean out the information necessary and then apply that information to the project at hand. In our case that will be taking your Civilian Entry examination.

An alternative process is available for those who learn better in a classroom environment. Firefighter level course are taught all throughout the year in every area of the state. A

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prospective Academy student need only audit (sit in on) those classroom portions of the firefighter courses covering those specific topics. Once the student feels comfortable with the information they can then request to take the Civilian Entry Examination.

### **How many times can an individual take the examination?**

The test can only be taken two times. There must be a five day waiting period when retaking the Civilian Entry Examination. Passing score is 70%. There must be a five day minimum waiting period when retaking the Civilian Entry Examination. If a student fails their second attempt they will then need to enroll in a VDFP Firefighter I and II school.

### **What type of certification will I receive by passing the Civilian Entry Examination?**

There will be no certification credit given for successfully passing the Civilian Entry Examination. Those taking and fully participating in a module of the firefighter level course will receive training hours towards future certification as a firefighter.

### **What types of questions are on the Civilian Entry Test?**

The questions are all multiple choice taken from the test bank purchased by VDFP. The process used in creating the questions is national accepted and all questions have been validated. Questions chosen for the Civilian Entry test are firefighter level and are specific to the topics listed in the Civilian Entry process. Answers to all questions can be found in the IFSTA Essentials Manual, fourth edition.

### **What book do I study and specifically which chapters?**

The text used in preparation for the Civilian Entry examination is the IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting manual, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. This text is available from the VDFP Bookstore at (804) 371-3558. However, those individuals associated with local fire departments may have spare copies of the text available for your temporary use.

### **What Chapters should I study or which modules do I need to attend to obtain the required knowledge?**

The new NFPA standards for firefighter certification have two levels, Firefighter 1 & 2. Topics come from both levels and each have an associated chapter in the IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Chapters to study are as follows:

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### **IFSTA Chapter**

- Chapter 1: Firefighting Orientation and Safety
- Chapter 2: Fire Behavior
- Chapter 3: Building Construction
- Chapter 5: Portable Fire Extinguishers
- Chapter 8: Forcible Entry
- Chapter 10: Ventilation
- Chapter 15: Fire Detection, Alarms Suppression Systems
- Chapter 17: Protecting Evidence for Fire Cause Determination
- Chapter 19: Fire Prevention and Public Fire Education

### **Where do I take the test?**

Tests are available from each of the Department of Fire Programs Division Offices and the Fire Marshal Academy which is located at the Central Office. Please call and set up an appointment. Arrive with sharpened pencils and the time necessary to complete the test. The Division Office will then forward that test to the VFMA for grading. VFMA will then forward the results of the test to the individual.

### **What other prerequisite must I meet in order to attend a Fire Marshal Academy course?**

Each student must also attend and successfully pass a Haz Mat Awareness course or be certified at a higher level. Information on these classes is available from each of the VDFP Division Offices. Students making application to an Academy class must attach a copy of the Haz Mat Awareness or higher level certificate, Firefighter 2 certificate or a note indicating the date and location where you took the Civilian Entry test.

### **What other certification will satisfy the prerequisite knowledge?**

A Fire Science or Fire Engineering degree should satisfy the Civilian Entry requirements. To qualify the applicant will need to provide a copy of their degree from an academically accredited institution of higher learning. However, applicants will still need to provide proof of successful completion of the Hazardous Materials Awareness or higher level course.