

# ***BUTTE COLLEGE FIRE ACADEMY***

*The Butte Fire Academy has been in the business of training future firefighters for over 30 years. The standards of the program are founded on the belief that only intelligent, skillful, strong, and adaptable people of good character are suitable for the fire service. The life-safety services provided by modern fire departments demand these skills and abilities, and our program is dedicated to providing the necessary training to augment the natural talents of our students.*

*Without exception, every student who attends the Butte Fire Academy finds the program to be extraordinarily challenging. Accepting a position in the academy is a commitment to an endeavor that will consume almost every waking hour of every day of the week. It is a place that demands the full attention and the very best effort of the student every day. In the 19-weeks our students spend here they earn 29 units of college credits; a pace unmatched in any other discipline in the college system. There are 50 individual written examinations on fire and emergency medical technician subjects, and the minimum passing score for each one is 80%. There are also a host of physical manipulative skills which are tested to the highest standards. The physical training portion of the academy is aimed at life-long fitness and is tested through a comprehensive agility course. The agility course consists of eight real-life fire fighting skills, and is modeled after the toughest departmental entry-level tests to be found. The entire academy is carried out in a paramilitary atmosphere where students wear uniforms, stand inspection, and operate in a strict chain-of-command structure. There is a certain formality here, but it evolves into a family.*

*Our students live the entire 19-weeks under a strict honor code which is in effect twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Nothing but absolute honesty is ever tolerated and violations result in immediate dismissal from the academy. Words have meaning here, and principles like honor, respect, courage, and tradition are taken extremely seriously. We sincerely believe that only people of good character have any business being in the fire service. Here it does not matter what sex you are, what your race is, or what your religion is. We do not care if your father is a fire chief or unemployed. Here, only two things matter: Can you do the job, and, Are you a person of good character. Tradition also has meaning here. The fire department's worthy reputation of service and self-sacrifice has been handed down to us from over two hundred years of examples set by the members of the American fire service who came before us, and with that good reputation comes responsibility. We are charged with maintaining and enhancing that image, and doing nothing to sully it. On a more local level we have the reputation of the Butte Fire Academy to uphold. We have over two thousand graduates who have gone on to work at fire departments all across the country and have risen to the highest ranks in the service. They did the work necessary to be successful in the academy and they expect us to hold on to those same standards for future students.*

*The Butte Fire Academy has an abiding sense of family to it. It starts at the individual company level, continues to academy class pride, and then extends to being recognized as a graduate of the institution. Students make life-long friends here. Every one of the fire agencies in our surrounding county boast graduates of the program. All of our teaching assistants, many of our instructors, and most of the staff are graduates of the Butte Fire Academy.*

*The difficulty of the program is best reflected in the failure rate of the students, which currently averages around 35%. The duties of a firefighter are carried out in the real physical world where only ability and performance count. Out on the streets there are no points for trying and you don't get second chances. People will live or die based on whether you do your job well or fail at it. Because of these simple, undeniable facts we know that not everyone has what it takes to be a firefighter. We cannot adopt the psychologically soothing attitude that everyone makes the team and everyone plays in the game. Here the attitude must be: perform or go home. Here the pace is lightening-quick, the standards are high, the rules are strict, and the program is uncompromising. We make no apology for that attitude, and in fact we are proud of it.*

*Success is dependant on preparation. The academic, physical, and social demands of the program are well beyond the norm of anything most students have ever attempted. This is college level work at an accelerated pace. Applicants with only a high school education or even college students with mediocre grade point averages will struggle here. And no matter how much you want to be a firefighter, you cannot will yourself to succeed in this program. The main reason for the current high failure rate is simply that students enter the program before they have done the necessary preparation. A future career in the fire service will stagnate without at least an associate degree. It would be excellent preparation to complete at least a portion of those studies prior to entering the academy. Butte College has a recommended 2-year plan for obtaining an associate degree in fire technology, in which the final semester is completed in the fire academy. Similar courses of study are available at many other community colleges around the state and the details will be available through their counseling offices. This preliminary work can be completed at any community college that has a fire technology program prior to attending the Butte Fire Academy.*

*Serving the people of your community as a firefighter can be one of the most beneficial and satisfying careers you can choose. The feeling of accomplishment and self-worth you will find are hard to match in any other occupation. The types of calls that firefighters respond to are just about limitless, and no two days are ever the same. At times the challenges can be extreme and the stakes life or death. You need a rock-solid base of knowledge just to get started, and then you need be committed to a lifetime of learning new skills during your career. The Butte Fire Academy can give you that solid base upon which you can build.*