

PREPARING FOR THE PANEL INTERVIEW

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The panel interview is a mandatory Step in the recruitment process for all Firefighter positions. The panel interview provides an opportunity for each candidate to be interviewed by more than one person and allow the interviewers to gain insight as to the qualifications of each of the candidates.

The interview is conducted by a panel of two or more people. A typical panel consists of two representatives of the job for which the candidate is applying and a representative from Human Resources.

At the conclusion of all of the interviews, the selection panel identifies successful candidates by interview scores based on their responses to the job-related questions, either "Behavioural-Event" or "Situational". This provides for consistent criteria for dealing equitably with all candidates.

The traditional and still common approach to interviewing is the "Situational Interview". A more relatively new concept in selection interviewing is the "Behavioural-Event Interview". You may find that a combination of both "Behavioural-Event" and "Situational" may be used.

The interview panel will record your responses by taking notes during the interview. Each panel member records the answers. The purpose of note-taking is to

help the interviewer recall what was said during the interview.

Following is a brief description of each style.

The Situational Interview (SI)

The "Situational Interview" describes to the applicant a job-related, hypothetical situation that they are likely to encounter on the job and asks the applicant what he or she would do in the situation. In order to achieve the maximum score the applicant is required to describe in detail a series of actions to take in a specific situation. The interviewers use a scoring guide consisting of sample answers to each question to evaluate and score the applicant's answers. The scoring guide for a situational question is based on behaviours that have been shown to be effective in a given situation.

What do questions under this approach usually begin with? A typical situational question begins with:

- "What would you do if"

Situational answers usually begin with:

- "I would"
- "I may"

Behavioural-Event interview (BEI)

The "Behavioural-Event Interview" is another interviewing style. Whereas the *situational* question focuses on future behaviours, the "Behavioural-Event Interview" focuses on past behaviours. What applicants say or believe they would do in a given situation may actually be

quite different from what they would have done in the past. Therefore, these questions gather specific examples of a person's past performance and experiences in areas that relate to the position. The "Behavioural-Event Interview" is based on the following premise:

- The best predictor of future performance is past performance
- When answering a "Behavioural-Event Interview" question, begin by describing the circumstances leading up to your action/behaviour, describe what you actually did and the results. The approach is almost similar to writing an essay. Your first paragraph describes what you will be writing about in your essay, the middle consists of facts, events, description and the end describes the results or outcome.
- As much as possible, talk about yourself in the first person using the word "I".

A typical "Behaviour Event" question begins with:

- "Tell me about a time when"

A "Behavioural-Event Interview" answer begins with:

- "I said"
- "I did"

Preparing For Your Interview

- Find out as much as you can about the interview process (i.e. refer to this information package, your local library, internet, government sponsored employment agencies, etc.)

- Learn about the job (i.e. attend at least one Firefighter Career Information Session and review the job call posting)
- Think about what you have actually done in your career that demonstrates you have the skills required
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses
- Think of possible questions and practice answering them
- Get informed about current initiatives and the direction of the organization
- By studying the job description, summarize and review good examples in your career where you have demonstrated the skills required to perform the job (i.e.: customer-service, problem-solving, decision-making, interpersonal skills, etc)
- **Practice** in front of a panel of 3 of your friends and video-tape yourself
- Control stress creating variables:
 - o know where you are going so that you can arrive on time
 - o be well rested and ready for the interview.

Getting Through the Interview

- Take the process seriously
- Be yourself, try to relax and make yourself comfortable
- Firefighter interviews are timed. If you finish all the questions and there is time remaining, you may want to revisit one or more questions to add information or you may want to go over all of the questions, again, depending on the time remaining

- Answer the question fully and to the best of your knowledge and ability. Answer the questions as if you are educating the panel members. Remember, the panel can only give you marks for the answers you provide
- If a question is long or has more than one part, use the pencil and paper provided to help keep yourself on track and not to formulate a written response
- Listen carefully and answer the questions you are asked. The panel will repeat the question as often as need be so don't hesitate to ask to have a question repeated. However, the panel cannot interpret the question for you
- Be honest and straightforward
- Be concise and specific
- Stay focussed and keep your composure
- Remember, the panel members are writing down everything you are saying so do not talk too fast or too softly ... you want to be heard
- And, remember that the panel is on your side. They want **you** to be successful in the interview!

Please direct further inquiries to:
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