



Firefighter **CANDIDATE READINESS**



www.maricopa-az.gov/MFMDCareers



INTRODUCTION

We're excited that you're considering a career in the fire service. Becoming a firefighter is a rewarding profession that requires both physical endurance and mental resilience. Our goal is to support you through the recruitment process and help set you up for success.

This guide was created to give you a better understanding of the physical and mental demands of the job and to help you prepare for them effectively. While not a one-size-fits-all program, it offers valuable insights, examples, and direction to help you begin building the strength, mindset, and readiness needed to thrive as a firefighter candidate.

We look forward to supporting you on your journey toward becoming part of the fire service family.





MARICOPA AT A GLANCE

Maricopa offers residents and businesses the experience of a small-town atmosphere that is within a short distance to two major metropolitan areas.

- Maricopa is Arizona's 88th municipality, incorporated on October 15, 2003.
- The City's population is approximately 73,300. That is a 25% increase over 2020 Census numbers.
 - Median Age = 38.2
 - Residents with some college education or higher = 68.6%
 - Average Household Income = \$83,600
 - Median Home Value = \$356,300
- Maricopa is approximately 43 square miles, with a planning area of 233 square miles.

CITY MISSION STATEMENT:
Unlock the full potential of the
City of Maricopa to create a
thriving and durable community.



Rankings

- #1 Most Diverse School District in the Phoenix Area (Niche.com - 2025)
- #2 Fastest Growing Cities (HomeSnacks.net - 2024)
- #5 Most Diverse Suburbs in Arizona (Niche.com - 2025)
- #4 Safest Cities in Arizona (USAbynumbers.com - 2024)
- #10 Best Suburb to Buy a House in Phoenix (Niche.com - 2024)
- #18 Best Places to Live in Arizona (AreaVibes.com - 2025)



NUTRITION ESSENTIALS

CLEAN BALANCED DIET

Eating a well-balanced diet free of processed foods is essential in gaining peak performance, healthy growth and well-being. Focus on easy simple building blocks to assist with your nutritional journey.

Food is fuel. Eat lean protein, complex carbohydrates, and the rainbow in vegetables and fruits. Fats should consist of healthy oils, avocado, and nuts. This is a starting block. Read food labels and avoid refined process foods with lots of ingredients you cannot pronounce.

Take your body weight x 15-16 calories per pound if bodyweight for a generic caloric need. IE. 200- pound individual would need 3000 total calories, (200x15). If trying to lose weight, a safe and sustainable caloric deficit is typically 500–calories per day (500 cal/day) ~ 1 pound of fat loss per week.



CARBS

Carbohydrates are your energy source for activity and recovery. Two grams per pound of bodyweight, is a good rule of thumb. Reduce by 0.5 grams if trying to lose body fat and add 0.5 grams if trying to add weight.



PROTEIN

Protein is the most important macronutrient for muscle recovery and growth. Individuals should aim for 0.75 to 1.5 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight depending on goals.



HEALTHY FATS

Healthy fats play a crucial role in our diet. Aim to consume about 0.5 grams of fat per pound of bodyweight each day to support optimal function. Avoid seed oils, and other processed oxidized fats but do NOT avoid fats – choose the right type.



PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Begin by preparing the body for upcoming physical tasks through dynamic movements designed to improve joint mobility and increase range of motion. This phase helps reduce the risk of injury by increasing blood flow, raising core body temperature, and lengthening muscle tissues.

Mobility prep includes dynamic stretches such as the World's Greatest Stretch, High Knee Cradle to Lunge, and Hamstring Scoop. These movements are followed by explosive drills—like High Knees, Broad Jumps, and Quick Starts—to activate the nervous system and enhance coordination between the brain and body. function. Training goals should match job function.



Improve strength by the using the functional movement patterns of:

- Squat
- Lunge
- Hinge
- Horizontal push/pull
- Vertical push/pull
- Step up

These movement patterns translate to job specific tasks which will be expected of you in a fire academy. Such tasks could consist of progressive hose pulls, carrying varying loads upstairs and on flat ground, managing charged hose lines, and securing waterways among other functional and dynamic tasks.



CARDIOVASCULAR PERFORMANCE



Firefighters are occupational athletes and must build cardiovascular endurance to meet the demands of the job. Training should target the three primary energy systems in the body:

Long (Aerobic) System – Improves sustained endurance and aerobic capacity.

Example: 30–60 minute weighted vest hike at 65–70% of your max heart rate.

Medium (Anaerobic) System – Builds the ability to recover quickly and perform repeated high-intensity efforts.

Example: High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) performed at 80–85% of your max heart rate.

Short (Lactic) System – Trains explosive power and the ability to tolerate lactic acid buildup.

Example: Sprint intervals or Tabata-style training at near-max effort (90–100% of your max heart rate).

Note: Heart rate zones are based on the standard formula (220 minus your age).

Acclimation

Recruit candidates will face demanding workloads for extended periods in hot environments and challenging weather—conditions that stress the nervous system. This can and should be trained both physically and mentally.

Start stepping outside your comfort zone. Train outdoors in warmer conditions and wear heavier clothing to simulate real-world discomfort. This job doesn't pause for weather or season.

Train smart and safely. Begin with low volume and gradually increase as your body adapts. Simply training in warmer temps with a sweatshirt and sweatpants is a good start. Always maintain proper hydration and electrolyte balance.



JOB SPECIFIC SKILLS

PHYSICAL PREPAREDNESS

Physical preparedness is designed to replicate the physical demands of a Firefighter Recruit or Candidate. Typical tasks include heavy equipment carries, high-rise operations under load, hose pulls (both static and dynamic), forcible entry, self-rescue drills, ventilation, vehicle extrication, and tool or ladder raises, all performed under significant load and time pressure.

Grip strength and aerobic capacity are common points of failure in academies and should be prioritized in training.



SAMPLE EXERCISES TO PREPARE INCLUDE HEAVY SLED WORK, FARMER'S CARRIES, AND WEIGHTED VEST HIKES TO SIMULATE ACADEMY CONDITIONS.



FITNESS PLAN

Success in the selection process starts long before test day—it begins with a consistent, disciplined fitness plan. The physical demands of this job are non-negotiable, and arriving unprepared will put you at a serious disadvantage. The sample fitness plan below is designed to help you build the strength, endurance, and resilience needed to excel in the physical fitness portion of the testing process during the two-day intern academy. Commit to the work now, and you'll be ready to perform when it matters most.



WORKOUT PLAN

Day	Focus
Monday	Lower Body + CPAT Drill Simulation
Tuesday	Upper Body + Conditioning Circuit
Wednesday	Long Cardio/Endurance
Thursday	Mobility & Recovery (Optional Light Cardio)
Friday	Full Body Power + CPAT intervals
Saturday	Stair Endurance + Core Stability
Sunday	Rest and Recovery



FITNESS PLAN

Week-by-Week Progression

Weeks 1-2: Build baseline fitness, mobility, and test familiarity

Weeks 3-5: Increase intensity, and weighted vest/gear drills

Weeks 6-7: Focus on speed and circuit transitions (reduce rest)

Week 8: Taper +simulate test under timed conditions

Monday-Lower Body Strength + CPAT Drills

- Warm-up: 5-10 min stairmaster or jump rope
- Strength Block
 - Goblet Squat - 4x10
 - Deadlift - 4x6 (moderate-heavy)
 - Walking Lunges - 3x20 steps
 - Step-ups w/ dumbbells - 3x12/each leg
- Stair Climb Simulation (5 min at 60 steps/min, add weight vest after week 3)
- Cool Down + Stretch

Tuesday-Upper Body + Conditioning Circuit

- Warm-up: Dynamic mobility + band work
- Strength Block:
 - Push-ups - 4x20 (or weighted vest max)
 - Pull-ups/Assisted Pull-ups - 4x max
 - Bent-over Row - 3x10
 - Overhead Press - 3x8
- Conditioning Circuit (3 Rounds)
 - Farmer Carry (50 lbs each-75 feet and back)
 - Sled Drag or Weighted Rope Pull (simulate CPAT)
 - Battle Ropes-30 seconds



FITNESS PLAN

Wednesday-Cardio Endurance + Core

- Cardio Options (Choose One)
 - 3-5 mile run (start with run/walk if needed)
 - 45 minutes stair climber (alternating pace)
 - 20 minutes rowing + 20 minutes of cycling
- Core Circuit (3-4 rounds) :
 - Plank - 60 seconds
 - Hanging leg raises - 15 reps
 - Russian twists - 20 reps
 - Side Plank - 30 seconds each side

Thursday-Mobility and Active Recovery

- Optional light cardio:
 - 30-40 minute light run, row, or stairs
- Mobility and stretching routine (30 minutes)
 - Foam rolling (quads, glutes, lats, calves)
 - Dynamic and static stretching (hip flexors, hamstrings, T-spine)
 - Breathing exercises

Friday-Full Body Power + CPAT Type Interval Training

- Power Block:
 - Power Cleans or Kettlebell Swings - 4x5
 - Box Jumps - 3x8
 - Sled Push or Weighted Carry – 3x30 yards
- Interval Circuit (4-5 rounds)
 - 1 minute stepmill (70 steps/minute)
 - 10 sandbag ground to shoulders (simulate dummy lift)
 - 10 medicine ball slams
 - 10 push-ups
 - 1 minute rest



FITNESS PLAN

Saturday – Stair Endurance + Core

- Stair Climb Session:
 - 20-30 minute intervals (simulate CPAT stepmill test)
 - Use weighted vest (20-50 lbs by Week 4-5)
 - Mix tempos: 1 minute fast, 1 minute steady
- Core Finisher:
 - Plank Variations - 3 minutes total
 - Suitcase Carries - 3x50 feet
 - V-ups - 3x20

Sunday – Full Rest Day



Equipment Suggestions:

- Weighted Vest (up to 50 lbs)
- Sled or tire for drag simulation
- Sandbags/dummy for carry practice
- Stairmaster or tall stair access
- Resistance bands for warm-up/mobility



PHYSICAL READINESS GUIDELINES

While the CPAT is a nationally recognized baseline requirement for fire departments, passing the CPAT alone does not guarantee readiness to meet the physical expectations of the City of Maricopa Fire/Medical Department. We have found that many candidates arrive with a CPAT card but lack the strength, endurance, or conditioning required to perform at our expected level on day one of the Intern Academy.

To address this, we have established a clearly defined physical expectation—one that goes beyond the CPAT and reflects the caliber of a highly performing fire department. These expectations are provided to incoming candidates in advance, along with a structured training program, so you have every opportunity to arrive prepared, capable, and confident.

The following standards mirror what you will experience in our Intern Academy and represent the benchmarks that successful recruits recommend for arriving ready to excel.

Your Mission

Passing CPAT means you're eligible.

Meeting these guidelines mean you're ready.

Show up to the Intern Academy capable, confident, and prepared to perform at the level expected of a Maricopa firefighter.

Train with purpose. Arrive ready. Succeed together.





PHYSICAL READINESS GUIDELINES

PHYSICAL TRAINING GUIDELINE

800m Run

Expectation: Time: 4:30

Purpose: Tests short-term endurance and work capacity under fireground-like intensity, mimicking 3–4 minutes of tool work, hose advancement, or stair climbing on air.

Trap Bar Deadlift (3 Reps)

Expectation: Bodyweight x 3 reps

Purpose: Simulates lifting gear, debris, or a downed firefighter. Ensures recruits can safely manage real-world fireground weight while reinforcing proper mechanics.

Farmer Carry (200 ft total)

Expectation: 50 lbs per hand (Male) / 35 lbs per hand (Female)

Purpose: Replicates carrying irons, saws, gas cans, or high-rise packs to the fire floor. Builds grip, posture, and core stability essential for operating under gear.

Pull Ups

Expectation: Bodyweight x 4 reps

Purpose: Simulates vertical overhead movement, testing recruits' ability to perform fireground survival functions of traversing over a ledge, through a window or bailout.

500m Row

Expectation: Time: 1:55

Purpose: A full-body conditioning test mimicking hose advancement or victim drags. Requires sustained power output and mental grit.

Standing Broad Jump

Expectation: 80 inches (Male) / 65 inches (Female)

Purpose: Measures lower-body power, coordination, and mobility—critical for explosive fireground movements such as climbing, stepping, and quick directional changes.



NUTRITION PLAN

MACRONUTRIENT BREAKDOWN

This nutrition plan supports strength, endurance, and recovery. Macros are based on 1 gram of protein per pound of ideal body weight, and strategic use of nutrient-dense carbohydrates on higher training days.

Example: 170 lb male → 2,200–2,400 Cal / 170 g protein per day— adjust portion sizes for other body weights)





NUTRITION PLAN

MONDAY

Breakfast:

3 eggs, 1/2 avocado, sautéed spinach in avocado oil

Snack:

Chia pudding with almond milk, topped with berries and walnuts

Lunch:

Grilled chicken breast, roasted sweet potatoes, broccoli with olive oil

Snack:

Beef jerky + handful of almonds

Dinner:

Wild salmon, zucchini noodles, roasted carrots

Calories: 2350 | Protein: 170g | Carbs: 160g | Fat: 105g

TUESDAY

Breakfast:

Scrambled eggs + turkey sausage, side of sautéed kale in olive oil

Snack:

Apple with almond butter

Lunch:

Ground beef lettuce wraps with avocado & tomato

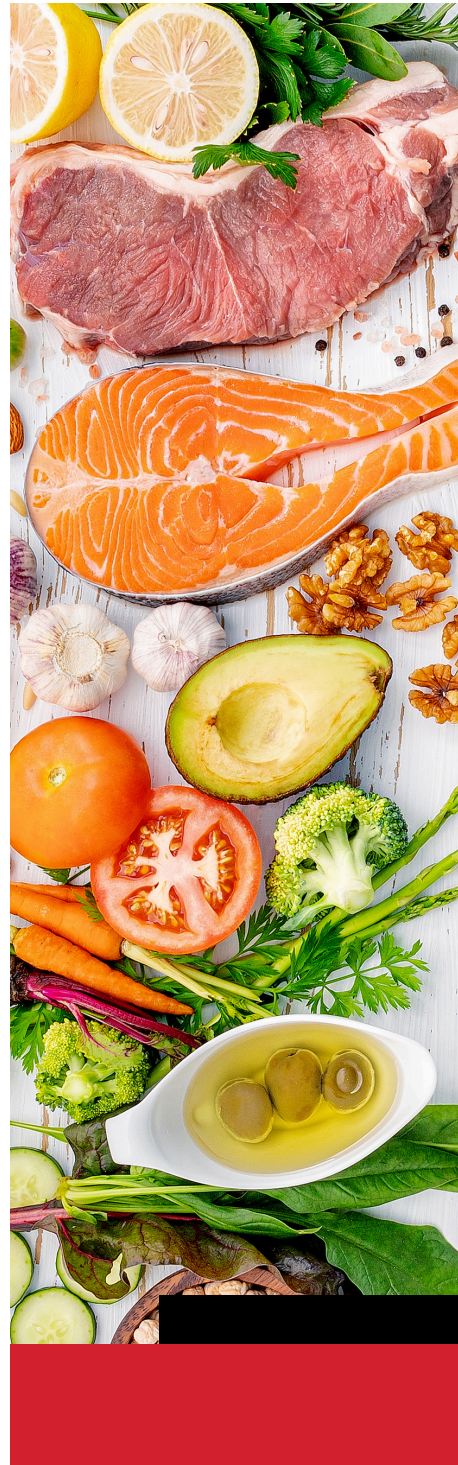
Snack:

Protein smoothie (Protein powder, coconut milk, berries, spinach)

Dinner:

Grilled chicken thighs, spaghetti squash, brussels sprouts

Calories: ~2400





NUTRITION PLAN



WEDNESDAY

Breakfast:

Veggie omelet (3 eggs), 1/2 sweet potato, avocado

Snack:

Boiled eggs + mixed nuts

Lunch:

Pork loin, cauliflower mash, sautéed green beans

Snack:

Coconut yogurt with chia and blueberries

Dinner:

Shrimp stir-fry with mixed veggies and cassava noodles

Calories: ~2300

THURSDAY (LOW CARB DAY)

Breakfast:

3 eggs, avocado, sautéed mushrooms

Snack:

Celery sticks with sunflower seed butter

Lunch:

Turkey burger over greens with olive oil dressing

Snack:

Hard-boiled eggs + walnuts

Dinner:

Grilled chicken, roasted asparagus, sautéed zucchini

Calories: ~2200 | Carbs: ~80g



NUTRITION PLAN

FRIDAY

Breakfast:

Sweet potato hash with eggs and bell peppers

Snack:

Protein shake + coconut chips

Lunch:

Salmon salad with avocado, greens, olive oil vinaigrette

Snack:

Apple slices + cashew butter

Dinner:

Baked chicken thighs, roasted butternut squash, broccoli

Calories: ~2400

SATURDAY

Breakfast:

Almond flour banana pancake, eggs, berries

Snack:

Greek yogurt, nuts, cinnamon

Lunch:

Turkey meatballs, spaghetti squash, marinara (no sugar)

Snack:

Protein smoothie with banana, kale, coconut milk

Dinner:

Grilled steak, sweet potato wedges, green beans

Calories: ~2400





NUTRITION PLAN



SUNDAY

Breakfast:

Veggie egg scramble with avocado

Snack:

Cucumber slices with guacamole

Lunch:

Cobb salad with chicken, bacon, egg, avocado, olive oil

Snack:

Boiled eggs + nuts

Dinner:

Grilled salmon, roasted cauliflower, sautéed spinach

Calories:~2200 | Carbs: ~85g





IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The application process for Firefighter Recruit with the City of Maricopa Fire and Medical is a two-step process.

1. Complete the city application first. <https://www.maricopa-az.gov/MFMDCareers>
2. Visit <https://www.publicsafetyanswers.com/maricopa> and complete video interview and test.



*City application MUST be completed before moving on to the interview and test portions