



Fire Certification Program Background Investigations Frequently Asked Questions

At the request of the Board on Public Safety Standards and Training (Board), a multi-disciplined workgroup comprised of law enforcement and fire service professionals was assembled to review the standards regarding background checks of individuals applying for employment or affiliation with a public safety agency.

The workgroup developed a list of questions that they believed, at a minimum, should be asked of all public safety officer applicants prior to be employed or utilized as a public safety professional to ensure that the individual is of good character. The Fire Policy Committee and Board reviewed this standard as proposed. The standard was open for public comment on December 1 – 23, 2014 and was enacted on December 29, 2014.

Q: What does this mean for my agency?

A: Fire service agencies are required to conduct a background investigation on all applicants prior to employment or affiliation with a public safety agency.

Q: What questions must be included in a background investigation?

A: OAR 259-009-0015 requires fire service agencies investigate, at a minimum, the background of all applicants for employment or affiliation with regards to:

- *Criminal history and arrests;*
- *Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records;*
- *Drug and alcohol use;*
- *Education verification;*
- *Employment history;*
- *Military history verification;*
- *Personal and professional references. Personal and professional references may include, but are not limited to, friends, associates, family members, and neighbors;*
- *Personal Interview. The personal interview may occur before or after the investigation and may be used to clarify discrepancies in the investigation;*

- Residential history; and
- Work eligibility.
- Records checks. Records checks **MAY** include, but are not required to include:
 - Police records, district attorney, court and Oregon Judicial Information Network (OJIN) records;
 - Open sources or social media, as permitted by law;
 - Financial information, as permitted by law; and
 - Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Professional Standards records.
- Each individual being considered for employment or utilization must also provide a notarized personal history statement. The statement must include, but is not limited to:
 - Verification of the background information listed above;
 - A complete list of all fire service agencies an individual has applied with; and
 - A signed release allowing background investigation information to be shared with other public or private safety agencies in which the applicant may become affiliated with.

Q: How detailed does a background investigation need to be? Is our agency required to retain the services of a professional background investigator?

A: The purpose of the background investigation requirement is to ensure that public safety agencies are cognizant of the personal histories of the individuals that are being allowed access to their agencies and the members of their communities. This standard is designed to serve as a reference for agencies only. The only requirement of OAR 259-009-0015 is that the categories specified are covered. The breadth and depth of the investigation is completely at the discretion of the agency.

Q: Is my agency required to conduct a background check on all applicants, regardless if they are career professionals or volunteers?

A: Yes. All fire service professionals, career and volunteer, being considered for employment or affiliation after December 29, 2014 must be subjected to a background investigation prior to employment or affiliation with a public safety agency.

Q: Am I required to conduct background investigations on fire service professionals already affiliated with my agency?

A: No. This requirement is applicable to applicants for employment or affiliation after December 29, 2014 only.

Q: Will DPSST be reviewing the results of the background investigation completed by public safety agencies?

A: *No.* The intent of this standard is to serve as a resource for agencies. DPSST will not review, approve or deny the results of any background investigation. Agencies are free to employ or utilize any individual they see fit.*

** OAR 259-009-0015 does require the investigation be reasonably available for review by DPSST in the event of an investigation into a fire service professionals ability to obtain or maintain DPSST certification.*

Q: Is there a form available that my agency can use as a guideline for conducting a background investigation?

A: *Yes. DPSST has a form that is used internally for conducting background investigations on potential employees that we would be happy to share. Local law enforcement agencies may also be a good resource for agencies who are unfamiliar with conducting a background investigation.*

Q: A fire service professional from another agency is applying with my agency. Am I required to conduct a full background investigation?

A: *Yes. Again, the intent behind this standard is for agencies to be aware of the background history of individuals prior to being employed by or affiliated with public safety agencies.*

Q: Am I required to perform a background investigation on every person who applies to be employed or volunteer with my agency?

A: *No. The standard requires background investigations be done on the individuals being seriously considered for employment or affiliation. The background investigation may be the final step in an interview process.*

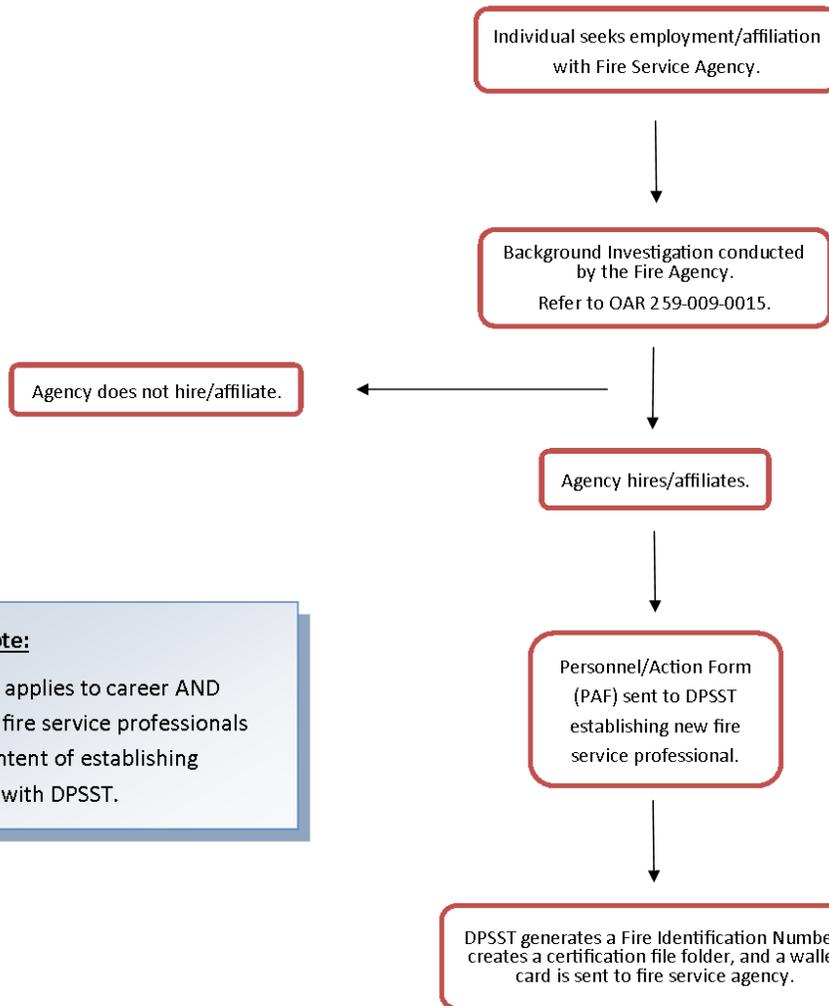
Q: Are there retention requirements for the background investigation?

A: *OAR 259-009-0015 requires fire service agencies retain the results of a background investigation in accordance with your agencies retention schedule.*

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training Fire Service Background Investigation/Affiliation Flow Chart

Revised 3/15

The Fire Policy Committee and the Board on Public Safety Standards and Training recognized the need to conduct thorough background investigations on any applicant wishing to become a career or volunteer fire service professional. Agencies are required to perform background investigations on individuals seeking affiliation with a fire service agency after December 29, 2014 (refer to OAR 259-009-0015). For more information, please refer to the Fire Certification Background Investigation FAQ.



Please Note:

This chart applies to career AND volunteer fire service professionals with the intent of establishing affiliation with DPSST.