



# CITY OF BUFFALO

## CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

### PROMOTIONAL

The City of Buffalo offers online filing. You may complete and submit your application online at the City of Buffalo website: [www.city-buffalo.com](http://www.city-buffalo.com). Click the "APPLY HERE" link and follow the instructions.

**DIVISION FIRE CHIEF – No. 2248017**  
**\$97,443/Yr.** (Salary is subject to change)

A NON-REFUNDABLE APPLICATION PROCESSING FEE OF \$25.00 MUST ACCOMPANY YOUR APPLICATION. CASH, CHECK OR MONEY ORDER ONLY. IF PAYING BY CHECK, YOUR CHECK MUST CLEAR TO COMPLETE PROCESSING.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:** The following qualifications must be met at time of filing application.

Applicants must have continuous and permanent status or contingent permanent status or a combination of both in the Department of Fire as a Battalion Chief for at least one year immediately preceding the date of this examination.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:**

- Possession of a current NYS Driver's License, which must be presented at time of appointment and maintained during employment.
- Possession of Emergency Medical Technician certification within eighteen (18) months of date of appointment.

**SENIORITY**

Points will be added to a successful candidate's score as follows:

- 0.2 for or each year of continuous and permanent status in the classified civil service up to a maximum of twenty years.

**SUBJECT OF EXAMINATION**

Structured Oral Assessment.....Weight..... 100%

Candidates must receive a passing score on the SOA to be placed on the Eligible List.

**PREPARATION MATERIALS**

This promotional process will consist of an SOA to test for relevant knowledge, skills and/or abilities. This SOA will be comprised of three exercises. I/O Solutions has provided a website devoted to candidates taking the Buffalo Fire promotional testing components to provide relevant documents throughout the process. This "landing page" will house information related to the promotional process that is furnished by I/O Solutions. This information may include a videotaped candidate preparation/orientation session and other information of note (i.e., summary information and preparation material for the SOA, etc.).

The website is: <https://iosolutions.sharefile.com/d-s98d7fd1058d47b59>. Note that the website is currently active; however, files will be uploaded as they are released throughout the process. You will be required to provide your email, name and company (Buffalo Fire Department) in order to access this website.

Given that the process for Division Chief does not include a written job-knowledge examination, no reading list or source materials are required. However, we strongly encourage candidates to continue to stay current with the department training manuals, communications, and operations manual units as knowledge of these sources is always important.

**FINAL FILING DATE**

September 15, 2017

**EXAMINATION DATE**

Week of: November 13, 2017  
(8/21/17)

### **Structured Oral Assessment Orientation**

An orientation will be conducted to provide information about the SOA process. This session will cover the structured oral assessments, interviews and assessment center components. Dates will be set for this orientation and announced at a subsequent time. I/O Solutions consulting staff will be present for this orientation session to answer questions that candidates may have about these processes. This orientation is scheduled for Wednesday September 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. 1:00 pm, and 6:00 pm and Thursday September 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 pm, located on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall, Common Council Chamber at 65 Niagara Square, Buffalo, NY 14202. Only candidates that have submitted an application for this exam are eligible to attend.

Please note that the orientation will cover all ranks in the promotional process, including Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief and Division Chief.

The dates of the SOA have not been finalized and candidates will be notified of the exact dates after the conclusion of the examination registration period. It is advised that you be mindful of your availability to participate in this test, as no alternate test dates will be permitted, except as required by law.

At this early stage of planning, potential assessment weeks for the rank of Battalion Chief include dates of mid-November. Efforts are being made to secure a site during the week of November 13<sup>th</sup>. Additional information will be available at the conclusion of the promotional process registration period.

I/O Solutions does not support or endorse any outside test preparation firms—unfortunately, no outside agency has any credible knowledge or understanding of this particular process. The I/O Solutions assessment orientation will last approximately two hours and will comprehensively cover the assessment process to provide everyone with a strong foundation to compete in this process.

### **STRUCTURED ORAL ASSESSMENT (SOA)**

An SOA is a hybrid between a structured oral interview and an assessment center, whereby several “exercises” are administered. These exercises could be interview-type exercises or assessment exercises. The exercises utilized may be administered over the course of one or more days to ensure security of the process (i.e., your participation may occur over the course of several days). Please see the description below for each type of component. Typically, an SOA consists of several separate interview sessions (concerning separate topic areas with separate panels) and one or two assessment style exercises.

### **Structured Oral Interview**

This exercise may consist of a single interview or a series of structured interviews over the course of one or more days. Each structured interview will consist of a series of pre-determined questions. An interview is considered “structured” when the interview content is consistent across all candidates in the process, formal pre-determined job-related rating criteria exist to ensure assessors can consistently and fairly evaluate your performance, and when the interview administration is consistent, structured and follows professional guidelines. The content of the interview questions may vary significantly depending on the rank in question but could include (though are not limited to) the following general topics: Tactical issues (how you would handle certain job-related situations that are technical or tactical in nature); management and supervisory issues (Mgmt. ranks); issues concerning leadership, ethics and best practices; background knowledge, skills and abilities related to the position; community relations and customer service; Problem-solving and analysis and decision-making, etc. Interview questions may be situational in nature (presenting you with situations and asking how you would respond), based on previous experiences (asking you what you have done to handle similar circumstances in the past and what knowledge, skills and abilities you might have developed to handle similar situations in the future), or self-report (describing your skills and abilities; work you have done in preparing for promotion, your job-related background, etc.).

### **Assessment Center**

An I/O Solutions’ assessment center is a battery of job simulations/exercises geared toward measuring essential skills and abilities of promotional candidates. Common exercises include one-on-one role-plays, group presentations, tactical simulations, in-basket/in-box simulations, management interviews, and written problem solving exercises. In any “role-play” exercise, you will be provided with detailed and specific instructions and you will play the assigned role for the duration of the exercise (e.g., a new captain meeting with a subordinate experiencing work-related performance problems). For example, you might conduct a one-on-one role-play exercise where you meet with a subordinate whom is

not performing well and requires your supervision and management to improve. In such an exercise, you will “role-play” with a professional actor (recruited by I/O Solutions and trained specifically for this role). Another role-play exercise might place you at a community meeting to discuss a problematic issue with a particular community group. Another role-play might require you to conduct a shift briefing/roll-call with your subordinates. In such a meeting you would make assignments, discuss relevant issues and introduce yourself to new staff members (based on the instructions for the exercise). Similarly, you might be required to make a formal presentation as part of the assessment center process. This presentation could be on your background, qualifications, skills, abilities and preparations for promotion. In a completely different vein, you might be asked to prepare and present recommendations for changes in fire services and protocols. Tactical exercises may require you to discuss how you would handle critical tactical situations—such exercises could actually require you to interact with role-players or simply provide verbal responses to scenarios (similar to interview questions). Finally, there are a myriad of written exercises that are used in assessment centers including in-basket exercises and written problem-solving exercises. Such exercises will be presented in more detail during the I/O Solutions sponsored orientation sessions.

In any assessment, you will be evaluated by assessors from outside the agency that are unknown to you to ensure the fairest and most consistent process. Candidates are rated according to their adherence to the pre-determined rating criteria in the various exercises and/or interviews. Exercise will be custom developed for the Buffalo Fire Department (including the rating guidelines). I/O Solutions will oversee the process including the development, validation, assessor recruitment, assessor training, assessment administration and rating, and the tabulation of results.

**The dates of the SOA have not been finalized and candidates will be notified of the exact dates in subsequent communication. It is advised that you be mindful of your availability to participate in this test as no alternate test dates will be permitted, except as required by law.**

#### **SOA (Structured Interview, Structured Oral Assessment and/or Assessment Center) Appeals Process**

By rule, and similar to other municipalities, there is no right of appeal regarding the SOA—including interviews and other assessments. Thus, you are unable to view the exercise instructions, rating criteria, specific rating packets used by the assessors in scoring your interview/exercise or any other proprietary assessment material associated with the administration phase of the secondary component (e.g., day of test materials). That said, our assessment consultant will collect formal feedback surveys at the end of the assessment process (upon check-out). You may document concerns in this survey and all documentation will be reviewed by I/O Solutions.

#### **Cut Scores Utilized**

Cut scores are utilized on the SOA. Cut scores are put in place to ensure that only those meeting the minimum qualifications are placed on the final eligibility list.

Please note that with the involvement of federal oversight in the promotional processes, we reserve the right to allow our vendor, IOS, to set cut scores after the administration of a particular component and after the analysis of the psychometric properties resulting from that component. In such an instance, IOS will evaluate several factors related to a component in order to make a decision regarding the cut score. These factors are presented below.

One strong consideration in setting cut scores on the SOA is the rating scale utilized and the descriptor points on the rating scale. For example, if a rating of “7” is indicative of “adequate performance” for a particular dimension/questions, the rating scale itself can serve as a guide in setting the cut point in order to ensure that candidates meet standards, as evaluated by the outside assessors. That said, other factors are also considered, including many of the factors presented above (e.g., mean, standard deviation, raw number passing at various cut points, candidate performance at various potential cut scores, etc.).

#### **Testing Policies**

Please note that it is essential that you arrive on time for the SOA. It is your responsibility to account for unusual circumstances that may affect your ability to arrive on time, such as weather, traffic conditions, etc. Failure to appear on time for a scheduled testing, interview or assessment session will disqualify you from participation in the promotional process.

Please note that all content and material associated with the promotional process are secure and confidential material, and should remain so for a period of 18 months after a given examination has concluded. This material is critical to the future of the city, the Buffalo Fire Department and the individuals participating in the process. You must not breach the confidentiality of this process. This means that you should not discuss any testing content with any current or former member of the Department, citizens of the metropolitan area, agents of test preparation firms, or any other person who has the potential to communicate this secure information to any other person. The information to be held secure and confidential includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- 1) The types of interview or assessment exercises utilized;
- 2) The specific interview or assessment exercise instructions, material, or requirements;
- 3) Any specifics or generalities regarding your participation in the promotional process including how you handled any interview or assessment exercise and what was said, done or performed by you, the assessors or the actors;
- 4) Any specifics or generalities regarding potential criteria;
- 5) **ANY** information that may be helpful to others in preparing for this event.

In discussing the contents of this promotional process before the expiration of the 18-month period, please understand that you have breached the confidential nature of this testing process and that you may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with policies and rules and regulations of both the city and the Fire Department. Please understand that USERRA laws require municipalities to provide testing opportunities to department members on active military duty and thus a required military make-up could be administered at any time after your process has been administered.

In addition, please understand that any unethical behavior (i.e., cheating) associated with the entire promotional process will result in the disqualification of that candidate and possibly, further disciplinary action. This behavior includes (but is not limited to) bringing in unauthorized material to any examination (written, interview, or assessment, etc.), including cheat sheets, source materials, electronic devices, recording devices, etc.; trying to photograph, remove or otherwise take any testing content; or, in any way providing test content to any other individuals (this includes, but is not limited to other test participants, members of test preparation firms, etc.).

**EXAMPLES OF WORK (Illustrative Only):**

- Supervises and coordinates the activities of companies in his/her battalion;
- Responds to fire alarms within assigned district and to other fires as may be called upon in accordance with established procedures;
- Relieves Fire Captains and takes command upon arrival at scene of fire directing all firefighting and life saving activities until relieved by a superior officer;
- Analyzes emergency scene to determine what safety procedures need to be implemented to protect personnel at the scene;
- Directs the deployment of companies and personnel at the scene of a fire;
- Determines the necessity for additional firefighting companies and personnel and notifies fire dispatcher or such requirement;
- Identifies shortages on current and next shift and takes steps to call-in and detail personnel to meet staffing minimums in compliance with union agreement;
- Reviews requests for leave, duty exchanges, and other temporary personnel actions and makes recommendations based on department and union policy and available staffing;
- Periodically inspects fire stations, equipment, personnel and records of assigned companies to ensure efficiency and conformity with departmental rules and regulations;
- Takes corrective action on irregularities observed.
- Determines if specialized training is needed due to fireground observations, procedural changes, etc.;
- Supervises, trains and instructs firefighting personnel in various phases of firefighting **and rescue operations** i.e.; proper use of ladders, hoses, special equipment, respirators, breathing apparatus;
- Directs staff in the enforcement of fire prevention ordinances;
- Reviews and investigates (or directs investigations) complaints involving actions taken and/or services performed by department personnel to determine the facts of the situation;
- Prepares and submits various reports pertaining to firefighting activities in the assigned district;
- Receives reports, or observes instances, of non-compliance with department policies among subordinate personnel and takes appropriate action;
- Tours a structure to identify such characteristics as construction type, structure features, early detection systems, automatic suppression systems, etc.;
- Provides information to civilians while on service runs;

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING WEATHER CONDITIONS ON THE DAY OF THE EXAMINATION –**

In the event of severe weather conditions on the day of the examination, please listen to the following radio/tv stations for postponement or delay in the starting time of the administration of the examination: WBEN 550, WGR 930, WWWWS 1400, WWKB 1520 AM RADIO, WKSE 98.5, WLKK 102.5, WTSS 107.7-FM RADIO OR WIVB-TV (CH. 4). If no such announcement is made, you must presume that the examination will be administered as scheduled.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR USE OF VETERAN'S CREDITS**

If you are currently serving on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, you may apply for veteran's credits. These veteran's credits shall be granted on a conditional basis at time of establishment of the eligible list. You will be restricted from certification using these credits until you have received an honorable discharge or release under honorable conditions. Your

**DD214** must be presented as proof of service during war time, before you can be certified for appointment from the eligible list using these credits.

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**Special Requirement for Appointment in School Districts and BOCES**

**Per Chapter 180 of the Laws of 2000, and by Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, to be employed in a position designated by a school district or BOCES as involving direct contact with students, a clearance for employment from the State Education Department is required.**

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