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When you first apply for a specific fire department, or more importantly, start doing research for a particular fire department (well before they are even accepting applications), it is a good idea to keep a file or binder for that specific department.

It's a good idea to do this because the average firefighter candidate has to take multiple firefighter examinations prior to getting hired, and it can get very challenging trying to keep track of all of the applications you have outstanding, not to mention the various stages of the hiring process you will be in with the numerous departments you've applied for.

At the bare minimum, here is the information to keep in a file or binder specific to a department you're applying to or planning on applying to:

1. The latest job flyer (to refer back to since you may be asked questions on it and more importantly, you know what you're getting into).
2. A copy of the application and resume you submitted (to refer back to since you may be asked questions on it and more importantly, to use as a foundation for the background investigation and any other future correspondence).
3. Any news articles related to that department and/or city (these are really critical as they give you a flavor or a feel for what is going on in the department, good and not-so-good).
4. Any information downloaded from the department and the city (or governing body) website (helps you prepare for the oral interview).
5. Any documentation related to the hiring process, such as notices sent to you advising your application was accepted, of key testing dates, or of anything else related to the position you are applying for.
6. A copy of the latest department budget.
7. Notes from the station visits you have done and the questions you have asked of the personnel working for that department and city (again, more info for the oral interview).

Key point: Even if you do not get hired by a specific department, it doesn't mean you should discard or shred all of the related information. Why? Because you may find yourself applying for and testing with that department again, and even again, depending on how bad you may want to work for them.

In a course of four and a half years when I was testing to become a firefighter, I had the opportunity to test with the City of San Jose Fire Department three or four times (they didn't keep their lists that long, and they also had separate processes for paramedics).

Had I not kept everything, it would have caused me more work each time I was applying.

Plus, I ran the risk of contradicting information should the rare chance occur that they compare notes with my previous applications.

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