



NEW ZEALAND
FIRE
SERVICE
Whakarātonga Iwi

Career Firefighters' Guide to

TAPS

TRAINING AND PROGRESSION SYSTEM



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National Commander's message



“The new Training and Progression System (or TAPS as it is better known) has been designed to conserve the best of the old, while at the same time introducing proven methods from the contemporary training world.

“National Training has worked hard to give the Fire Service the training system it rightly deserves. This has been done with the co-operation and support of numerous firefighters and officers from all regions, supporting National Training management and staff as subject matter experts. Together they have created a systematic training scheme that will enhance our professionalism and allow us to meet the challenges of the future.

“The NZPFU has been extensively consulted throughout and has been able to provide much valuable advice. TAPS will certainly mean some significant and immediate changes in the way we train, and more changes will certainly follow as our technology improves. Change can sometimes create uncertainty, but I want to assure you that with TAPS the New Zealand Fire Service will have one of the best firefighter training systems in the world.”

Mike Hall

NZPFU message



“The New Zealand Professional Firefighters’ Union has been closely involved in the design and implementation of the TAPS training programme for career firefighters. The union believes TAPS has been designed in the best interests of New Zealand firefighters and consequently endorses members’ involvement with the programme.”

Derek Best, NZPFU secretary

MESSAGES

INTRODUCTION TO TAPS

HOW TAPS WILL WORK

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The Fire Service Training and Progression System (TAPS) for career firefighters is, as the name suggests, a system governing the career progression of every firefighter through the ranks from the newest recruits to chief fire officers and beyond.

TAPS is designed to be more flexible, yet more robust than the previous training methods employed by the Fire Service. It introduces distance learning into the programme for progression through ranks, but also places great importance on practical training and assessment.

The principles underpinning TAPS are present in all new programmes being developed by National Training.

Training structures and the length of time needed to complete each stage of TAPS will vary from programme to programme, but all have four components in common:

- Each programme contains distance learning, where those on the programme gain theory knowledge through distance learning material. The material is designed to be completed within a set timeframe at the participant's convenience. Distance learning will be assessed through workbooks and sent in assignments;
- A secure examination will be held following completion of distance learning. The examination will be based on the content of distance learning materials and other stated required reading;
- The practical course is where the theory is practised and assessed in a practical context;
- Consolidation is the final component and occurs at the end of each programme. This is where all the new learning is applied on station in a structured way using your local equipment and procedures.

TAPS is compulsory up to the level of QF. After that, it is voluntary.

What's different about it?

Many of the training components are much the same as the 'phase' system – particularly the practical elements. However, things have changed – some in subtle ways, some more obvious. Some of the changes include:

- Training and assessment is focussed on the work firefighters will be doing in the role they are training for;
- The programme is structured around a mix of theory and practical training and assessment;
- Consolidation periods complete the programme, which ensures knowledge is put into practice before any new training is taken on;
- More relevant exams; and
- Firefighters will be able to access all TAPS material via FireNet.

What's better about it?

The TAPS programme has improved on its predecessor in a number of ways:

- By providing more comprehensive materials that are aligned to each progression step and making theory and practical assessment more relevant to the jobs the firefighter will be doing;
- By ensuring the safe person concept is incorporated into theory and practical assessments; and
- By aligning TAPS with the National Qualifications Framework administered by NZQA.

This ensures the training is of more value to firefighters in terms of the tasks they will perform in each rank, their ability to balance work and study in the job and the value of the training as a qualification.

How TAPS will work

As you progress through the Fire Service, the sort of work you can expect to do changes. Firefighters of FF, QF and SF rank are the front-line, with tasks largely based around emergency response work and involvement in community fire prevention. TAPS courses for attaining these ranks will deal primarily with these tasks.

SOs and SSOs tend to do more incident management and front-line supervisory work. Their involvement with fire prevention in the community is usually of a higher level. TAPS courses for attaining these ranks will involve assessment of task-based leadership and decision-making.

Once officers reach executive officer ranks (DCFO and above) they are primarily concerned with managing their patch, be it a few stations, a district or a whole region. The Fire Service's strategic objectives come into their day-to-day decision-making, as well as long-term planning. TAPS courses for attaining these ranks will assess high-level leadership and strategic thinking.

While the tasks that different ranks perform often overlap, the TAPS courses have been designed as a series of distinct steps with new knowledge and skills taken on at each level.



TAPS progression chart



Specialist programmes

Programmes for fire safety officers, region trainers, planners and other specialists to build on their skill base by specialising – based on regional needs and their own areas of expertise.



Transition to specialist programmes

Executive programme

Part 1: Knowledge and skills to run a fire district.

Part 2: Knowledge and skills to run a region.

SSO programme

Focus on staff management and high-level incident management. Course partly run by NZIM. **15 months.**

SO programme

Command and control, basic station management tasks and fire safety generalist skills. Practical course at Whyte Island. **18 months.**

SF programme

Focus on basic leadership and training skills. **15–18 months.**

QF programme

Tops up skills gained in recruit programme and on shift. **15–18 months.**

Recruit programme

Focus on basic skills and knowledge. **11-week residential programme.**

You must complete two years paid service in each rank before you can progress to the next rank.

HOW TAPS WILL WORK

How long does it take?

All staff must serve a minimum of two years paid service in each rank before they are eligible to progress to the next one, as per the collective agreement.

How much time is involved in studying for each programme will vary between individual firefighters. The distance learning element of each programme is designed to be completed at the convenience of the student within a number of weeks.

Practical courses and exams will be of fixed lengths in between periods of distance learning or consolidation.

The total programme length varies from rank to rank. More detail is available in the following chapters dealing with specific ranks, and on FireNet.



Who will do the training and assessing?

Dedicated trainers have been selected in consultation with the NZPFU. Trainers receive support from National Training and are assigned to practical training delivery, practical assessment or written assignment marking. The selection process has been designed to be transparent and objective.

What support can I get during TAPS progression?

A comprehensive student handbook, as well as a programme overview, accompanies each TAPS programme. These are given to each student at the beginning of a programme and are also available on FireNet under the *Training* heading. As well as this there is a range of support available to students, including the TAPS learner support co-ordinator. **Details of all learner support services are on page 21.**

What happens if I do not achieve a pass for any part of the programme?

It is important that you can demonstrate competency for all theory and practical components of a programme. Your programme trainer will provide you with feedback on your learning and achievement throughout the programme.

If you are unable to meet the minimum requirements for a workbook or assignment you can re-submit it, so long as it is submitted with enough time for it to be re-marked before your next practical course. If the work is not submitted in time, or is still not deemed to be sufficient for a pass, you will not be able to attend the practical course.

Should you not achieve competency in any practical assessment or exam, you may be given the opportunity to re-sit this assessment or exam when the next programme intake comes through, or at another time agreed between you and your programme manager.

For new recruits, the system is slightly different. If you have any concerns about achieving competency for any aspect of the recruit programme, please discuss this with your trainer.

HOW TAPS WILL WORK

TAPS alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

As well as job progression, TAPS is a way of gaining internationally recognised qualifications.

National Training has worked with the Fire and Rescue Services Industry Training Organisation (FRSITO) to determine the best way for firefighters to accumulate unit standards as they train in their jobs.

This means that everything you achieve will be recognisable within and outside the Fire Service.

TAPS courses and their NQF equivalent

TAPS course

Recruit programme (plus consolidation and QF stage 1)	Nat. Certificate, level 2, Urban Fire and Rescue Operations
QF programme	Nat. Certificate, level 3, Urban Fire and Rescue Operations
SF programme	Nat. Certificate, level 4, Urban Fire and Rescue Operations
SO programme	Nat. Diploma, level 5, Urban Fire and Rescue Operations
SSO programme	New Zealand Institute of Management (NZIM) Diploma in Frontline Management Australia Business Training Diploma in Frontline Management Nat. Certificate, level 4, First Line Management

TAPS programme information

The following section contains information specific to each programme. Rather than reading the whole thing, skip ahead to the section(s) relevant to you.

- » Recruits page 10
- » QF programme page 12
- » SF programme page 14
- » SO programme page 16
- » SSO programme page 18
- » Executive Officer programme page 19
- » Specialist programmes page 20

Questions?

This guide can't answer all questions about TAPS.

All programme information for programmes QF to Executive Officer is available on FireNet. The programme overview accompanying this study material goes into much greater detail than this guide is able to about the components that make up each programme.

On page 21 of this guide is a list of the support people available to you for help with the programme.

If you still have questions, go to the TAPS discussion group or the FAQ sections on FireNet. Someone from National Training will give you a prompt answer.

Information for recruits

Welcome to the New Zealand Fire Service.

During the coming weeks you'll be learning the fundamental skills of becoming a career firefighter. The learning curve will be steep and it will take a lot of on-station work in the months following to consolidate the knowledge and skills you are learning, so they stay with you as you progress through the Fire Service.

TAPS will make the process of gaining rank in the Fire Service a transparent and consistent one. You will be placed on the QF programme within a few months of being assigned to your station.

From there, you have the option of putting yourself forward to advance to senior firefighter, apply for officer training and take your Fire Service career as far as your abilities allow.

Whatever progression you undertake, TAPS will be a part of it, offering clear, relevant and consistent training to meet your needs and those of the Fire Service.

For now, however, the only thing you need to focus on is passing the recruit course to earn that yellow helmet. Good luck!





Welcome to the New Zealand Fire Service.



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The QF programme

The Qualified Firefighter (QF) programme is seen under TAPS as the completion of a firefighter's core skills. Accordingly, the QF programme is compulsory for new firefighters.

New firefighters will be put onto the programme within a few months of being assigned to their first station.

The programme has two distance learning stages, two practical courses and an exam. Following training and assessment, firefighters on the QF programme will undertake a period of consolidation of their new skills and knowledge before they are signed off as having completed the programme.

The programme is designed to be completed over 15–18 months, but completion times will vary between individuals.

QF programme structure

**DISTANCE
LEARNING**

PRACTICAL

**DISTANCE
LEARNING**

← Approx 15–18



QUALIFIED FIREFIGHTER

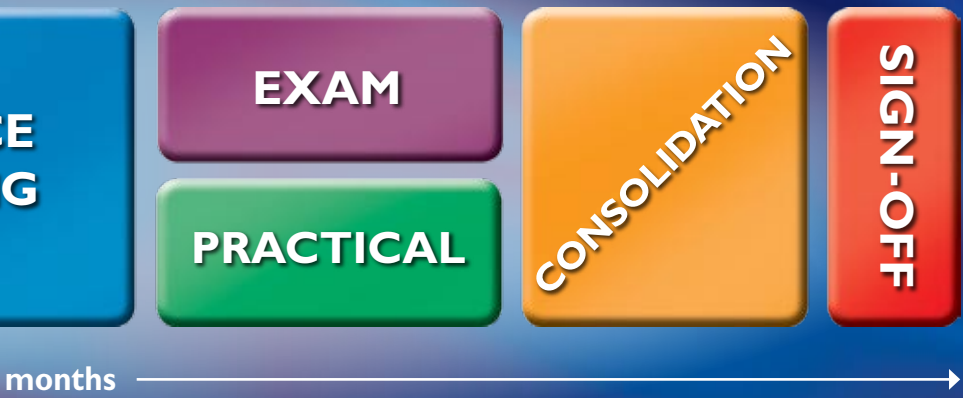
What's in the programme?

The QF programme adds to the core skills taught in recruit training. Programme participants will be assessed on the theory and practical elements of community education, building construction, lift rescue and hazardous substances to name but a few of the topics.

The consolidation stage which follows the final practical course is not a formal assessment. It is an opportunity to put new skills and knowledge into practice.

Some of the skills learnt may not occur very often in your district (eg a ship fire), so drills and training evolutions will be used to gain experience in these skills after the course.

Detailed information about the course content and structure is available in the [QF Programme Overview](#) and on FireNet under the *Training* heading.



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The SF programme

Senior firefighters are the link between 'front-line' firefighters and operational officers. As such, the SF programme combines elements of emergency response and fire risk prevention with supervisory skills.

The programme has a distance learning stage, a practical course and an exam. Before being signed off as new senior firefighters, programme participants will need to undergo a period of consolidation.

The programme is designed to be completed in about 15–18 months, but this will vary between individuals.

SF programme structure

REGION-BASED

DISTANCE LEARNING

EX

PRAC

← **Approx 15–18**

* Region-based course delivery (MVA and pump operator course) must be completed before promotion to senior firefighter, but can be completed any time following completion of the recruit programme



SENIOR FIREFIGHTER

What's in the programme?

The programme will primarily train participants to take on greater responsibilities both at the incident scene and on station. General leadership skills, scene supervision, and other elements of the senior firefighter role will be taught.

The consolidation stage is not a formal part of the assessment, but a chance to put skills and knowledge picked up on the course into practice. The length of the consolidation stage will depend on the firefighter demonstrating an understanding of the skills needed to be a senior firefighter.

Detailed information about the programme content and structure is available in the SF Programme Overview and on FireNet under the *Training* heading.

COURSE DELIVERY*

AM

TICAL

CONSOLIDATION

SIGN-OFF

months →

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The SO programme

The role of station officer is a challenging step up from the firefighter ranks. In an emergency, so much depends on clear, decisive decision-making by the first arriving officer.

The SO programme starts with a set-up briefing for students by the programme manager, setting out the requirements of the course and what students must do to ensure successful completion.

The programme has a distance learning stage, a practical course and an exam. Passing the exam is a prerequisite requirement to gaining entry to the practical course at the Whyte Island hot fire training facility in Queensland.

At some point during the distance learning, students will be required to undertake the Fire Investigation I course.

The programme is designed to be completed in about 18 months, but this may vary considerably between individuals.

SO programme structure



Approx 18



STATION OFFICER

What's in the programme?

The distance learning component of the programme focuses on the main skill sets needed by a station officer – incident management and station management.

Topics covered in the distance learning include pre-incident management, incident ground management and staff development.

An exam, based on theory gained in the distance learning.

The consolidation stage follows the practical course to allow participants to put their new knowledge and skills into practice.

Detailed information about the programme content and structure is available in the [SO Programme Overview](#) and on FireNet under the *Training* heading.

PRACTICAL

CONSOLIDATION

SIGN-OFF

months



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SENIOR STATION OFFICER

The SSO programme

The role of the senior station officer builds on that of the SO, forming a link between operational and executive officers in much the same way as the SF acts as a bridge between firefighters and operational officers.

The SSO programme will be jointly run through National Training and the New Zealand Institute of Management (NZIM). It will develop leadership and management skills to help participants take the step up to a more senior position.

The NZIM component will involve distance learning and face-to-face courses, while the Fire Service component will be distance learning-based. Following these courses, students will attend a practical course covering co-ordinated incident management and command at a senior level. Assessment of these key skills will be achieved through table-top exercises and computer simulations.

The programme is designed to be completed in about 15 months, but this will vary between individuals.

Detailed information about the programme content and structure is available on FireNet under the *Training* heading.

SSO programme structure





EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Executive Officer programmes

The TAPS programme for executive officers is in two distinct parts. The Executive Officer 1 programme, deals with prospective chief fire officers and deputy chief fire officers.

Participants will undertake a mix of internal distance learning, assignments and extramural university papers covering areas such as staff, asset and project management.

The programme is designed to be completed in about 24 months and constitutes partial completion of a Graduate Diploma in Emergency Service Management.

The Executive Officer 2 programme is designed to upskill serving chiefs and deputy chiefs to assistant fire region commander and fire region manager roles.

Detailed information about the Executive Officer programmes and structure of these programmes is available from National Training.



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Specialist programmes

Fire safety specialists

The TAPS programme for fire safety specialists builds on the relevant subjects from the SO programme.

Fire safety officers could move, depending on the needs in their region and their own areas of interest and expertise, onto one or more specialist programmes. These include technical fire safety, fire investigation and community education.

After these programmes are undertaken, fire safety officers could – again based on the needs in their region – undertake higher education in the technical and investigative areas.

Detailed information about the programme content and structure is available from National Training.

Other specialists

Other specialists include people such as hazardous substances officers, planning officers or other highly specialised operational roles.

Because of the lower numbers of people moving into these areas, no formal TAPS programmes have been developed.

Instead, training will be personalised to the individual. Where required National Training will offer a skills audit of people in these roles (and those seeking appointment to these roles) to assist regions to determine what specific areas of development would be beneficial.

Learner support

TAPS is designed to allow you to develop the knowledge and skills required to progress through the ranks of the Fire Service, but it doesn't mean you have to do it alone. There are many people around to help you with study tips, technical queries, or updates on your progress.

Your fellow students

Chances are if you've encountered a problem, someone has been there before, and will have an answer. Asking another student may be the quickest way of solving a programme-related question. You can reach other students through the TAPS discussion group in FireNet.

Your officer/chief

Your supervising officer is there to help. Most queries that can't be resolved by talking to a fellow student can be answered by speaking with your officer or chief.

TAPS support officers (TAPS trainers)

TAPS trainers know the programme content as well as anyone and can resolve any issues you are unable to resolve on station. They are there to help students and watch officers.

TAPS learner support co-ordinator

The TAPS learner support co-ordinator is a new position in charge of learning support for the TAPS programmes. If you are still looking for assistance you can contact them for answers. You can do this through FireNet or the TAPS Learner Support email address learner.support@fire.org.nz

The programme manager

The programme manager has an understanding of the programme content, delivery and assessment components. Contacting the programme manager should be a last resort, or for high-level queries about programme design and delivery.



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**NATIONAL
TRAINING**

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