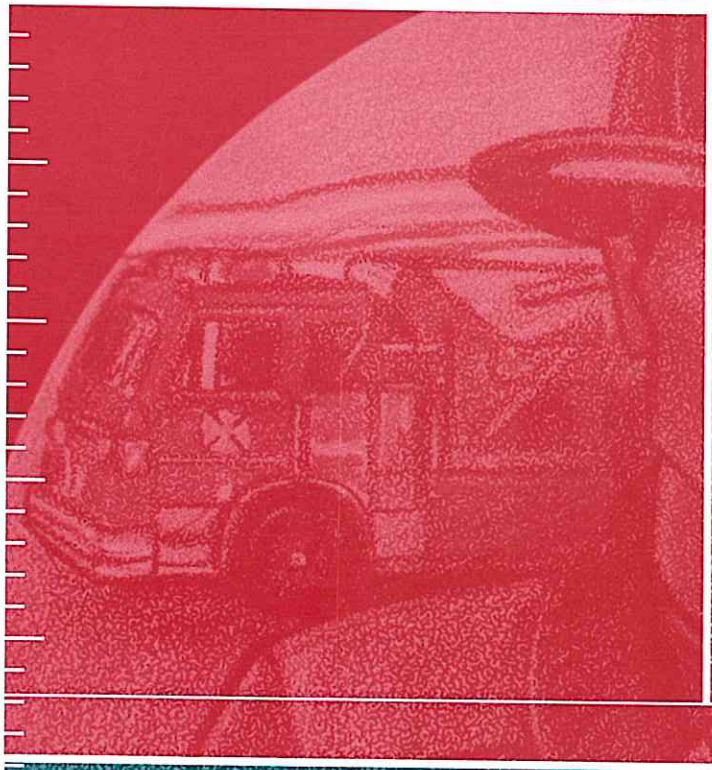
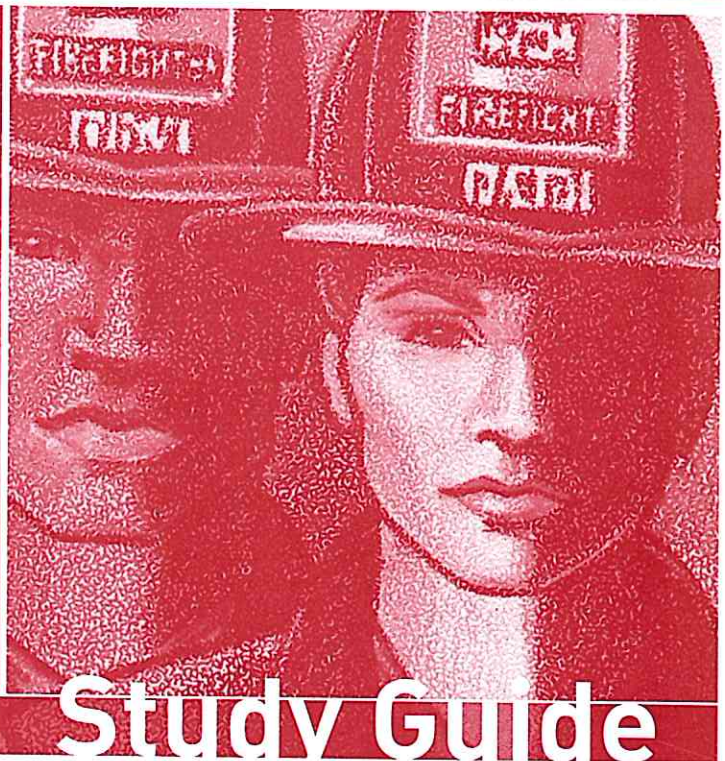
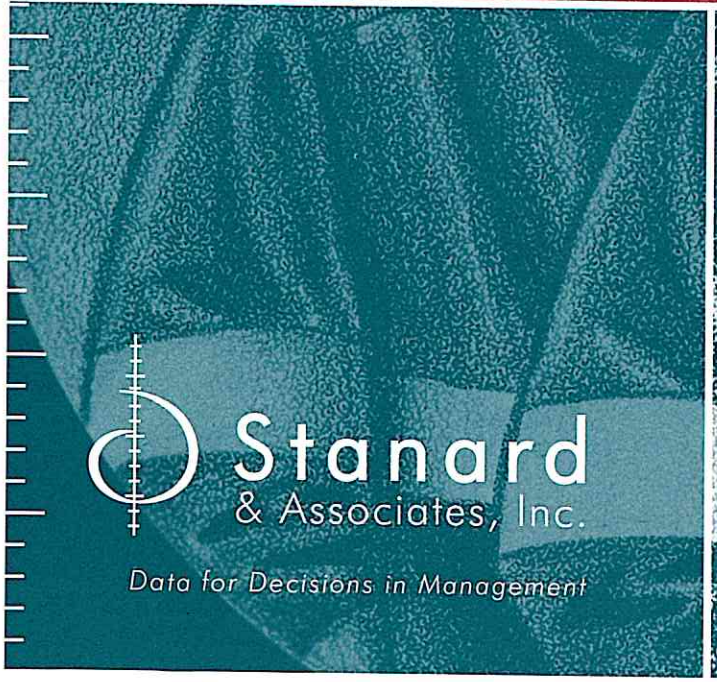
THE NATIONAL

Firefighter Selection Test





Study Guide



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STUDY GUIDE FOR THE NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER SELECTION TEST

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NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER SELECTION TEST
STUDY GUIDE

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Introduction

This study guide is designed to help you obtain your maximum potential score on the National Firefighter Selection Test (NFST). It is divided into four parts which provide useful information for preparing to take this test.

Preparing for the Test

Taking the Test

Sample Test Items

Sample Test Answer Key

Preparing for the Test

You will increase your chance of obtaining your best possible score if you spend some time preparing for the test. This includes finding out as much as possible about the test ahead of time, paying proper attention to yourself physically before the test, not becoming overly anxious about the test and using a good test-taking strategy.

For optimal test results, read this study guide thoroughly and answer the sample test items beginning on page 7. Make sure you read all the directions carefully and each test question completely before answering.

Test Format

The NFST is made up of three separate sections: Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension and Mathematics, all of which use a multiple-choice or true/false format. Each section is administered and timed separately. Specific instructions are provided at the beginning of each section. Although most of the questions in this test battery relate to firefighting, you need no prior knowledge of the fire service to answer the questions.

Examination Hints

Your score is based on the total number of correct answers, so try to answer every question on the test. This means there is no penalty for guessing, so respond to every item, even if you are not certain of the answer. When you are not certain, make your best guess and move on to the next question.

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Time Limits

It is important to know the amount of time allotted for each section of the test so you can pace yourself and avoid spending too much time on questions giving you trouble. Remember there is no penalty for guessing. If you find you are spending too much time on a question, guess and move on. If you finish before time is called, you can go back and check your answers. The number of items and the time limits for each section of the test are listed below.

Section	Number of Items	Time (Minutes)
Reading Comprehension		
Standard Version	25	25
EMS Version	35	35
Mathematics	25	30
Listening Comprehension	20	20

Marking Your Answers

Since the test can be hand scored or computer scored, it is important to follow the instructions given at the test administration to ensure your answers are read correctly. Below is a summary of the scoring instructions for both the hand scored and the computer scored versions of the test.

Hand Scored Version

- Use a pen.
- Make heavy black marks that completely fill the circle.
- If you want to change your answer mark an X over the incorrect response like this . Then mark the new answer.
- Make no stray marks on the test booklet.
- Use the scratch paper provided in the test booklet for the math section.
- Note that the response alternatives are listed horizontally to the right of the question.

Computer Scored Version

- Use a #2 or softer lead pencil. Do not use ink.
- Make heavy black marks that completely fill the circle.
- Completely erase any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on the test booklet.
- Use the scratch paper provided in the test booklet for the math section.
- Note that the response alternatives are listed vertically below the question.

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Be sure that you blacken only one response for each question. If you blacken more than one, the question will be incorrect, even if one of the answers is correct.

All three sections of the test are in multiple-choice or true/false format; a question followed by either two or four alternatives. The sample questions in this guide are in the vertical format.

For each question there will be either two circles labeled A and B or four circles labeled A, B, C and D. You will blacken the circle that corresponds to the answer you think is correct. For example, assume that for test question number 1, you feel that B is the correct answer. You would blacken the circle labeled B in the test booklet, as shown below.

1. (A)
   (●)
   (C)
   (D)

Taking the Test

This part of the NFST study guide provides some common sense advice for the day you take the test. Although some of these things may seem obvious, paying attention to such details will increase your probability of obtaining your maximum potential score.

Before the Test Begins

Arrive early. You may be assigned a seat or you may be able to pick your own. Either way, settle in and put your things away. Try to relax, but concentrate on the test you are about to take. Put outside distractions out of your mind. Give the test you are about to take your complete attention.

Listen Carefully

The test administrator will provide you with complete and detailed instructions for taking each section. Be sure to pay close attention to what this person has to say. Do not read ahead because you may miss something important. If you do not hear or do not understand the directions, ask the test administrator to repeat them. It is extremely important that you completely understand the directions before the test begins.

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Test Timing

Just before the signal to begin each section of the test, make a mental note of what time it will be when the time limit is up. For example, if you begin a section at 3:00 and the time limit is 20 minutes, make a mental note that time will be up at 3:20. This will allow you to pace yourself while working through the test. Remember, your score on the test will be the total number correct. Therefore, you will want to work both quickly and accurately.

You should not spend too much time on any one question. Allow enough time to work through each one, but if you find you are spending too much time on an item, guess and move on. If you finish before time is up, you can always go back and check the questions where you guessed.

Preparing Yourself Physically for the Test

- Avoid junk food and concentrate on a well balanced diet for at least several days beforehand.
- Avoid tranquilizers and stimulants such as coffee, especially on the day of the test.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Do not drink a lot of liquid or eat a big meal before the test.
- Avoid alcohol several days prior to and especially on the day of the test.

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Sample Test Items

Section I – Listening Comprehension

This test measures how well you comprehend what you have heard. The test format is similar to listening and taking notes at a lecture on material you will be tested on later. A passage will be read to you, and you will take notes as you deem appropriate on notepaper that will be provided in the test booklet. Later in the testing session you will be asked questions about the material in the passage, and you will be able to refer to your notes when answering. The questions will be in a multiple-choice and true/false format.

Have someone read the following sample listening passage to you so you may take notes as you listen. Reading the passage should take no more than 5 minutes. Set the notes aside and refer to them later on in this guide when you answer the sample test questions.

Sample Listening Passage

Have someone read this passage to you as you take notes.

Most of us rely on our local municipal fire department to provide us with fire protection, fire suppression and emergency medical services. These benefits are typically provided with tax revenue from the community the fire department serves. However, there are also a number of private fire departments that serve industrial complexes and military installations, as well as private businesses.

There are basically three types of private fire departments. The first can be described as an industrial fire department, because it serves commercial facilities such as large oil refineries and small private airports. These businesses choose to maintain equipment and personnel to respond to fires and other incidents on their property for a variety of reasons. These include an inability or unwillingness of the local community to provide needed resources, their remoteness from any public fire department, and the need for a more immediate response time. This type of private fire department essentially serves only the business which maintains it. Another type of industrial fire department is employed by the U.S. Department of Defense, which operates more than 200 fire departments within military installations in the United States. These agencies, however, also cooperate with neighboring communities through mutual aid agreements.

The second type of private fire department is a private enterprise that owns firefighting equipment and hires firefighters to provide fire protection for the public. They do this under contract with government agencies. Many areas and small communities find it less expensive and more convenient to contract with a private firm to provide some services that public fire departments elsewhere provide.

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The third type of private fire department, which is the least common, is the nonprofit fire department that operates primarily on a subscription basis. The way this works is that property owners in a given area pay a yearly subscription fee for fire protection services. It is somewhat like fire insurance. You pay a fixed amount of money every year in return for fire services, as needed. These subscription-based fire departments will also respond to incidents in nonsubscribing properties, but the owner is assessed a fee for services, which can run as much as ten times the annual subscription.

Now set your notes aside and continue with the rest of this sample test.

Section II – Reading Comprehension

This section measures how well you understand what you read. It consists of a number of short paragraphs, each followed by some questions. All the information you need to answer the questions is contained in the paragraphs. In some instances, you may need to draw a conclusion from the information.

Sample Passage #1

Although smoke alarms have been around since the 1960s, the single-station, battery powered smoke detectors we have today have been available since the 1970s. Estimates put smoke alarms in about 93% of American homes. They should be installed on every floor, including the basement and outside every bedroom. If you sleep with the door closed, the smoke alarm should be inside the room. Since smoke rises, they should be mounted high on the wall or on the ceiling. Wall-mounted alarms should be positioned 4 to 12 inches from the ceiling and ceiling mounted detectors should be mounted 4 inches from any wall. They should not be put near a window, door or air register where they could be affected by drafts. Smoke alarms should be tested every month, the batteries changed once a year and the detector itself replaced every ten years.

1. According to the information in the passage, smoke alarms have been in use since

   (A) the 50s
   (B) the 60s
   (C) the 70s
   (D) 1995

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2. Based on information in the passage, people who close their bedroom door when they retire, should mount

   Ⓐ the smoke detector on the ceiling right outside the room
   Ⓑ one smoke detector on the ceiling and one on the wall
   Ⓒ the smoke detector in the room
   Ⓓ the smoke detector above a window

3. According to the information supplied in the passage, ceiling mounted smoke detectors are more effective than those placed on a wall.

   Ⓐ True
   Ⓑ False

4. Based on information in the passage, wall-mounted smoke detectors should be placed near the ceiling

   Ⓐ because smoke rises
   Ⓑ so they don't interfere with the heating and cooling system
   Ⓒ so they are nearer the windows
   Ⓓ because the sound will carry better

5. According to information in the passage, smoke detectors should be

   Ⓐ replaced yearly
   Ⓑ tested monthly
   Ⓒ placed on every floor except the basement
   Ⓓ placed close to an air register

6. According to the passage, smoke detectors can currently be found in

   Ⓐ about half the homes in the US
   Ⓑ nearly three quarters of homes in the US
   Ⓒ more than nine out of ten homes in the US
   Ⓓ every home in the US

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Sample Passage #2

Firefighting professionals number about 250,000 throughout the United States. This number does not include volunteer firefighters, who may perform the same duties and may make up the majority of firefighters in a given area. There are also about 65,000 first line supervisors in the fire service and nearly 15,000 fire inspectors, who are usually part of a department's fire prevention division. These workers inspect structures to prevent fires and ensure code compliance. Fire investigators determine the origin and cause of fires by collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses. They also prepare reports and may also testify in court. The increasing role of firefighters has prompted some cities to combine fire prevention, fire education, safety and emergency medical services into a public safety organization.

7. According to the information in the passage, volunteer firefighters

   (A) make up the majority of all firefighting positions
   (B) number about 65,000
   (C) perform the same duties as career firefighters
   (D) are mostly involved in fire safety programs

8. According to the information in the passage, firefighting duties have expanded to the point that some municipalities have combined fire-related services and emergency medical assistance into a single organization known as a fire awareness organization.

   (A) True
   (B) False

9. According to the information in the passage, ensuring code compliance is one of the duties of

   (A) first line supervisors
   (B) fire inspectors
   (C) fire investigators
   (D) EMTs

10. According to the information in the passage, which of the following groups is comprised of the greatest number of firefighters?

   (A) Fire investigators
   (B) Fire inspectors
   (C) First line supervisors
   (D) That information is not contained in the passage.

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11. According to the information in the passage, fire inspectors may

    Ⓐ examine structures
    Ⓑ appear in court
    Ⓒ talk to witnesses
    Ⓓ lecture on fire safety

12. According to the information in the passage, fire inspectors would typically be a segment of a fire department's

    Ⓐ fire prevention division
    Ⓑ fire education division
    Ⓒ fire safety division
    Ⓓ public safety division

Sample Passage #3

A toxin is any substance that can harm a person when it enters the body. An ingested toxin is consumed orally and can result in nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. When a toxic substance is absorbed in the intestinal tract, it can reach the blood stream and become fatal. Inhaled toxins usually affect the airways, lungs or brain and are quickly absorbed into the blood stream through the lung tissue. Oxygen is the first treatment for those with inhalation poisoning. A spider bite is an example of an injected toxin which can lead to weakness, dizziness and fever. Absorbed toxins enter the body through the skin and emergency medical care includes removing the substance from the patient. Garden insecticides are a common source of absorbed toxins.

13. According to the passage, a poisonous snake bite would be an example of an

    Ⓐ absorbed toxin
    Ⓑ ingested toxin
    Ⓒ injected toxin
    Ⓓ inhaled toxin

14. According to the passage, inhaled toxins are absorbed into the blood stream through the intestinal tract.

    Ⓐ True
    Ⓑ False

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15. According to the passage, which of the following is a symptom unique to ingested toxins?

    Ⓐ Dizziness
    Ⓑ Difficulty breathing
    Ⓒ Stomach cramping
    Ⓓ Weakness

16. According to the passage, how should a paramedic treat a patient who has fainted because she inhaled noxious fumes?

    Ⓐ Open a window to air out the area
    Ⓑ Give oxygen to the patient
    Ⓒ Apply a warm compress to the patient's head
    Ⓓ Transport the patient to the hospital to have her stomach pumped

17. According to the passage, which of the following could be considered a potential absorbed toxin?

    Ⓐ A spider bite
    Ⓑ Carbon monoxide fumes
    Ⓒ An ant spray
    Ⓓ Aspirin

Section III – Mathematics

This section measures your ability to perform the basic math functions required of entry-level firefighters. It consists of fire-related story problems and formulas that call for you to use addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. There are also some problems that call for simple algebra, squares and square roots.

18. If a firefighter has to search a warehouse that is 60 feet long and 40 feet wide, what is the perimeter of the building?

    Ⓐ 100 feet
    Ⓑ 150 feet
    Ⓒ 200 feet
    Ⓓ 240 feet

19. 3 x 9 + 15 =

    Ⓐ 27
    Ⓑ 42
    Ⓒ 72
    Ⓓ Not given

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20. If A = 4, B = 5 and C = 6, what is AB + BC?

    Ⓐ 500
    Ⓑ 101
    Ⓒ 20
    Ⓓ Not given

21. There are times when a firefighter must open a wall to attack a fire, and therefore must be aware of the location of studs. If studs are placed every 16 inches, how many studs are in a 16 foot long wall?

    Ⓐ 6
    Ⓑ 10
    Ⓒ 12
    Ⓓ Not given

22. $7 + 5^2 + 13 =$

    Ⓐ 25
    Ⓑ 30
    Ⓒ 34
    Ⓓ Not given

23. $.5 \times 10 + 4.8 =$

    Ⓐ 27
    Ⓑ 9.8
    Ⓒ 12.4
    Ⓓ 54.3

Listening Passage Sample Test Questions

Refer to the notes that you took for the sample listening passage to answer the following test questions.

24. According to the passage, industrial fire departments

    Ⓐ work on a subscription basis
    Ⓑ usually work for small businesses
    Ⓒ operate in small private airports
    Ⓓ are expensive

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25. According to the passage, the private nonprofit fire department

    (A) is the most common
    (B) is paid for by property owners
    (C) will not provide service to nonsubscribers
    (D) is active on many military bases

26. According to the passage, most people are served by private fire departments.

    (A) True
    (B) False

27. According to the passage, private fire departments can serve

    (A) suburban communities
    (B) large airports
    (C) private businesses
    (D) All the above

28. According to the passage, why would an oil refinery use a private fire department?

    (A) Quicker response time
    (B) More favorable insurance rates
    (C) Reduction of potential liabilities
    (D) Better trained firefighters

29. According to the passage, how many fire departments does the U.S. Department of Defense maintain within military installations?

    (A) That information was not provided.
    (B) About 100
    (C) More than 200
    (D) At least 500

30. According to the passage, a private fire department that serves a small community would typically be

    (A) nonprofit
    (B) under government contract
    (C) part of a mutual aid agreement
    (D) paid for by subscribers

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31. According to the passage, who typically pays for the industrial private fire department?

    Ⓐ Tax revenues
    Ⓑ The government
    Ⓒ The enterprise that maintains it
    Ⓓ All those who subscribe to it

32. According to the passage, fire departments employed by the U.S. Department of Defense tend to work with neighboring communities through mutual aid agreements.

    Ⓐ True
    Ⓑ False

33. According to the passage, which of the following private fire departments is nonprofit?

    Ⓐ Those that serve small airports
    Ⓑ Those under government contract
    Ⓒ Those that serve private businesses
    Ⓓ Those that operate on a subscription basis

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Sample Test Answer Key

Section II - Reading Comprehension

1.	B	because the passage states that smoke alarms have been around since the 1960s.
2.	C	since according to the passage, people who sleep with their door closed should put the smoke detector in the bedroom.
3.	B	(False) since the passage does not state which is more effective.
4.	A	since the passage states that because smoke rises, smoke detectors should be mounted high on the wall.
5.	B	because the passage states that smoke detectors should be tested monthly.
6.	C	since according to the passage, 93% of American homes have smoke detectors.
7.	C	because according to the passage, volunteer firefighters may perform the same duties as firefighting professionals.
8.	B	(False) because according to the passage, some cities have combined fire prevention, fire education, safety and emergency medical services into a public safety organization.
9.	B	because the text states that fire inspectors inspect structures and ensure code compliance.
10.	D	since the text does not include the number of fire investigators, it is not possible to tell which group comprises the greatest number.
11.	A	because according to the passage, fire inspectors inspect structures and ensure code compliance.
12.	A	since the passage states that fire inspectors are usually a part of a department's fire prevention division.
13.	C	because a snake bite punctures the skin and is thus injected into the skin.
14.	B	(False) because inhaled toxins enter the blood stream through the lung tissues.

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15. C (stomach cramping), because it is synonymous with abdominal pain which is a consequence of ingested toxins.

16. B because the passage states that oxygen should be given to anyone with inhalation poisoning.

17. C because the passage states that garden insecticides are a common source of absorbed toxins and ant spray would be considered such an insecticide.

Section III - Mathematics

18. C because the perimeter of the warehouse is calculated by adding the width of the four sides: 60 + 40 + 60 + 40.

19. B because 3 multiplied by 9 is 27 and adding 15 equals 42.

20. D because 4 (A) multiplied by 5 (B) is 20; 5 (B) multiplied by 6 (C) is 30. 20 plus 30 is 50, which is not one of the answers given.

21. C because a 16 foot wall is 192 inches (16 x 12), and 192 inches divided by 16 is 12.

22. D (Not Given) because 7 plus 5 squared (25) plus 13 equals 45, and this is not one of the alternatives.

23. B because .5 multiplied by 10 equals 5, and 5 plus 4.8 equals 9.8.

Section I - Listening Passage

24. C because according to the passage, industrial fire departments serve commercial facilities and small private airports.

25. B because according to the passage, for the nonprofit fire department, property owners in a given area pay a yearly subscription fee.

26. B because according to the passage, most people rely on their local municipal fire department.

27. C because according to the passage, private fire departments serve industrial complexes and military installations, as well as private businesses.

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28.	A	because according to the passage, industrial fire departments serve commercial facilities such as oil refineries for reasons including remoteness from other fire departments and the need for more immediate response time.
29.	C	because according to the passage, the U.S. Department of Defense operates more than 200 fire departments in military installations in the United States.
30.	B	because according to the passage, many small communities find it less expensive and more convenient to use a private firm under contract with a government agency.
31.	C	because according to the passage, businesses with industrial fire departments choose to maintain equipment and personnel to respond to fires on their property.
32.	A	because according to the passage, the Department of Defense operates more than 200 fire departments within military installations that also cooperate with neighboring communities through mutual aid agreements.
33.	D	because according to the passage, the nonprofit fire department operates primarily on a subscription basis.

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