Sioux Falls has been chosen to host a firefighter pentathlon that is expected to draw hundreds of competitors from across the Midwest.

The national championships of the Scott Firefighter Combat Challenge in Las Vegas is televised each year on ESPN.

To compete at nationals, athletes must qualify at one of 18 regional sites, which this year will include Sioux Falls for the first time.

The event is Aug. 24-25 at Fawick Park and is expected to feature vendors, music and a children's competition.

"It's going to be a real carnival event for the whole weekend," said Jim Sideras, a division chief with Sioux Falls Fire Rescue.

Mike Bauers, a four-year veteran of Fire Rescue, is one of 14 team members in Sioux Falls.

Most of those are in it for the training, but Bauers and four or five others typically compete.

The Sioux Falls event is one of eight regional competitions city firefighters will compete in this year.
"It's exciting, a lot of good competition," Bauers said. "It'll be great for a lot of people to see what we can do."

The competition aims to promote physical fitness. Firefighters wear full bunker gear while performing five timed tasks that simulate a firefighter's duties during a structure fire.

After climbing a five-story tower carrying a 45-pound pack, the athlete pulls up a 45-pound hose roll. He then descends a tower and uses a mallet to move a 160-pound beam five feet. From there, he drags a charged hose 75 feet, and finally, drags a 175-pound mannequin 100 feet.

"It's been billed as the toughest two minutes in sports," Fire Chief Rick Larson said.

The event features male and female firefighters in various age groups in individual and relay runs.

In 16 years of competition, the individual world record is 1 minute, 19 seconds. The average athlete finishes in 3 minutes, 3 seconds.

Mayor Dave Munson said the event will benefit the city economically, but he emphasized that it will showcase the athletes' physical skills.

"People can really see the best of the best," he said.

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