Women as Firefighters

To the Editor:

Re “Despite Recruiting, Few Women Do Well in Firefighter Tests” (news article, Feb. 3): A New York City fire official expresses “frustration and disappointment” that intensive recruiting has yielded few female applicants for firefighter positions and only 11 able to pass a job-related eligibility test.

It is hardly surprising that few women want or qualify for this dangerous, physically demanding job. Women have far less upper-body strength and are less inclined to engage in physically risky activities than men. Although the department has not relaxed standards, it provides physical training for female applicants to improve their test performance. But why? Is a city with more female firefighters somehow better than one with fewer, assuming fair selection?

KINGSLEY R. BROWNE
Detroit, Feb. 3, 2000