

Fully Involved

# A Day In The Life Of A Firefighter

The firefighting profession is one of the most attractive professions in the United States. The schedule, camaraderie, and scope of work makes the job appealing to those who are looking to avoid the traditional office setting. The appeal of helping others in need, working in a chaotic environment and giving back to the community is a highlight that beckons to many.

The American fire service dates back to the days of Ben Franklin and many stereotypes of the fire profession have been created and cemented since that time. Many people believe that fire professionals still get cats out of trees and ride to fires on the back tailboard of the Fire Engine. Some of the stereotypes may have been true many years ago, but the essential safety standards that work to protect us and increase in public expectation has ended many fire service stereotypes.

Another stereotype that has long since passed at Fire District 2 is that of firefighters that sit around watching TV, playing games, and waiting for an emergency call. While firefighters may not be on actual emergencies around the clock, the additions of medical responsibilities, constant training and preparation have left no time for games or TV at Fire District 2.

The average day (I use this term with a smile on my face) starts with an official exchange of shift personnel at 8:00am. On coming fire crews actually begin to arrive at 7:00am to exchange information with the off going crew and prepare for their next 48 hours of duty. As the shift starts, the fire personnel start their day by checking and double checking every vehicle for supplies, mechanical readiness, and making sure that all vehicles are 100% ready for emergency response. This is the most critical part of the non-emergency day. One oversight can have life and death consequences. Checking multiple rigs and repairing small deficiencies does take some time and can last as long as three hours.

Station maintenance and upkeep are then completed by crews. This includes sweeping, moping, dusting, washing windows, cleaning bathrooms, grounds maintenance, and other routine cleanliness tasks. It's then on to physical emergency preparedness for the fire personnel.

The biggest threat to a firefighter is not fire but rather heart disease. In order to stay fit and physically ready to respond to the demands of the job the fire personnel spend an hour continuing their daily (on and off duty) physical fitness routines. Everyday firefighters participate in physical training to increase their cardiovascular endurance and muscle strength. A proactive approach to physical activity allows the firefighters to

maintain good health habits and react appropriately to the extenuating physical environment.

Lunch finishes off the morning work session at 12:00pm. The afternoon then starts with a brief shift staff meeting that gives the fire officer the opportunity to set the shift expectations for his/her crew. High priority tasks, as established by the Fire Chief, are completed at this time and the daily training goals and criteria are set. Fire crews spend a minimum of three hours a day, seven days a week training for the demands of an emergency response. Training is designed to develop and maintain proficiency in both firefighting and emergency medical response. Each year firefighters, EMT's and paramedics participate in hundreds of hours in continuing education to maintain certification levels. Training creates an opportunity for firefighters who have recently attended outside training sessions to pass on the new skills and ideas to other District fire personnel. This allows our firefighters to develop their professional abilities from sources inside and outside of the Fire District.

After apparatus checks, physical training, prioritized tasks (CPR classes, vehicle and equipment repairs, etc.), and staff training have been completed, the firefighters will have dinner and then begin to work on the Fire District's evening training programs. Our staff firefighters spend evenings working with our volunteer firefighters and Community Response Team (CRT) members, to prepare them for emergency response activities. The evening training accommodates volunteer family and work schedules. From 9pm on the shift fire personnel are given time to concentrate on personal development that can include fire service reading, college course work, and work on personal development plans as prepared by the fire officers. The work day is then repeated for the second half of the 48 hour shift.

These tasks are completed by our fire personnel with public education, fire station tours, blood pressure checks, CPR classes, school presentations, and smoke detector installations sprinkled in. The shifts are always full of activity that works to put the best product on the street. The work day is never routine as shifting priorities can alter any activity of the day.

The one item that I have failed to mention in this article is the over 2000 emergency responses that our fire crews respond on annually. Emergency medical call times average an hour and forty three minutes worth of crew time, from time of call to being ready for the next call. A fire call can last as long as six to eight hours. All work at the Fire Station is put aside as emergency response and attending to our citizens trumps any other activity.

Your firefighters and EMT's maintain a busy work day. They take pride and competitively push themselves on providing community services. The stereotype of playing cards or checkers has become obsolete at Fire District 2.

For more information on your Fire District, visit the site [WWW.MCFD2.COM](http://WWW.MCFD2.COM) or call 360-275-6711.

Question of the month: What year was Fire District 2 formed and who was the Fire Chief? The first email or phone call that I receive with the correct answer will receive a gift from Starbucks Coffee.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2's community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service, including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education though out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.