

# A Typical Day of a Career Firefighter

Anytown, USA

Many individuals asked what it is like during a typical day at the fire station. While nothing is typical, and there are no absolutes, this is an overview of what an "average" day might be like. The very nature of this job causes the best laid plans to be cast aside, when calls come in the middle of training classes, meals, meetings, and other activities that must occur for the Fire Department to stay proficient and to have working equipment.

8:00 AM - The shift begins. Firefighters coming on duty are encouraged to try to be at the station at least fifteen minutes early to receive any pertinent information from the off going shift about vehicle concerns, equipment problems, road closings, etc.

Roll call is conducted between 8:00 and 8:30. During roll call the station Officer ensures that all personnel are present, and he presents a briefing of planned activities for the day. Any information received from the off-going Lieutenant is passed along at this time. The crew takes part in small training exercises involving topics such as a review of maps to increase familiarity with the village's streets, or a quiz of paramedic operating procedures during this time.

8:30 AM - Once roll call is completed, the crews' next task is to "check the rigs." This is done daily to ensure that all vehicles assigned to the station are in good running order, that all equipment carried on each vehicle is present, and that it functions properly. While the crew has been given a status of the vehicles from the off going shift, the vehicles are checked anyway. This double check is a good way to make sure that nothing gets missed. The time to find out that something is missing or broken is not when we need it, especially when you are the one needing it. Additionally, on every Sunday, a weekly check is done on all apparatus in the station. This is more in-depth than the daily check and it is a top to bottom check of the apparatus and all equipment carried. Much time this day is spent on preventative maintenance of the vehicle engine and the motors of any power tools.

Following the daily vehicle check, the ambulance crew collects money from everyone on duty and does the grocery shopping for the day. (Yes, we pay for and cook our own meals). Meals at the firehouse consist of lunch and dinner, and each firefighter contributes about ten dollars a day for meals. Most meals are prepared at the firehouse by one or more of the firefighters on duty, but occasionally takeout food will be the order of the day. It should be stressed that the ambulance crew shopping is "in service." Shopping carts have been abandoned in the check out line due to a request for an ambulance. Storekeepers, aware of this, are generous enough to store our food in the cooler until we return.

This time is when minor station maintenance is done such as replacing burned out lights, fixing small items that may be broken, and cleaning or organizing areas of the station. On Saturdays, major station maintenance day, more time is given to yard work, washing windows, cleaning floor drains, waxing floors, painting, or any other activity that makes the station more presentable to the public, and a nicer place for us to live.

10:30 AM - From 10:15 to 10:30 the firefighters may take a short break, and then we're on to another activity. Physical fitness is a high priority with the Fire Dept., and time is set aside as often as possible for the firefighters to participate in various activities to ensure an adequate level of physical fitness to tackle the strenuous tasks that may be asked of us at a moments notice.

Noon - Lunchtime! Following fitness activities, the crew sits down for lunch. Lighter meals such as soup and sandwiches are common fare at lunchtime, but meals can vary depending on the time of year. Lunchtime generally runs from 12:00 to 1:00 PM, but as always, emergency calls can eliminate lunch or delay it for hours. When that happens, we simply work around it.

1:00 PM - On most Mondays through Fridays, training exercises of varying types are scheduled to keep our firefighters up to date on the many different types of emergencies that we could face daily. This includes the types of things we see frequently, such as emergency medical calls, as well as things that we don't see everyday such as water rescue calls, hazardous materials emergencies, and calls requiring specialized rescue techniques. These training exercises last anywhere from one to four hours at a time. Some sessions require that multiple stations must be involved, while other sessions can be handled at an individual station level. Additionally, some training exercises are scheduled at night, and during inclement weather. This ensures our ability to function effectively under most any conditions you could imagine.

5:00 PM - The "regular" workday ends. However, unlike most workers, we don't go home after an eight-hour day. Our shift lasts for 24 hours, and while the workload decreases after 5:00 or so, we must stay until 8:00 AM the next day. We "live" in the firehouse for 24 hours. What this means is that we eat, work, and sleep at the fire station. After 5:00 PM, if the work for the day is done, we are usually free to pursue various "personal" activities and projects as long as they don't limit our ability to respond to emergency calls. Usually the last "structured" activity of the day is dinner. Again we prepare our own meals, and while some choose to bring food from home, we all have our meals together. Our menu is as varied as that in any home, including such favorites as chicken, meat loaf, fish, and plenty of other selections. What's on sale at the grocery store on a given day often influences the menu. After meals there are minor cleaning issues that are dealt with such as cleaning the kitchen and dining room, cleaning the offices from the days activities, and cleaning the vehicles if they are dirty.

9:00 PM - Around this time some firefighters start heading for bed. By 11:00 PM most of the station has gone to bed. A full night's sleep is rare though. It is common that each station is awakened at least once during the night to handle an emergency call. Occasionally a crew may sleep very little, or not at all, as a result of running several calls during the night. We try to be considerate of sleeping residents by limiting the use of sirens during the night. The odds are that we have been on calls on your street during the night and you slept right through it.

7:00 AM - Time to get up. While our firefighters go off duty at 8:00 AM, they must be up and out of bed no later that 7:00. For the last hour of the shift there are quite a few things going on in preparation for the arrival of the oncoming shift. The floors are swept and vacuumed, any remaining dirty dishes washed and put away, and the washrooms are cleaned. In addition, the station officer must complete a report of the days activities.

8:00 AM - One shift goes home for 48 hours, and another begins work for 24 hours. And it starts all over again.