



ATFD RESPONDING

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ATFD STAFF

ATFD Fire Chiefs

Abington Fire Co.
Chief Michael Jones

McKinley Fire Co.
Chief Shawn Philipson

Weldon Fire Co.
Chief Bud Gerhard

Edge Hill Fire Co.
Chief Frank Schuck

Roslyn Fire Co.
Chief Michael Ratka

Fire Marshal:
John Rohrer

Fire Services
Administrator:
David Schramm

Community
Service
Specialist:
Jeff Glynn

Fire Department
Secretary:
Lisa Scholly

Administrative Support Team

Computer
Network
Administrator:
John Bothwell
Mike Ratka
(Assistant)

Fire Training
Coordinator:
Larry Siefken
Michael Jones
(Assistant)

What It's Like to Be A Firefighter? Find Out at A.T.F.D.'s *Firefighter Experience*

Do you have what it takes to be an Abington Township firefighter? Current volunteers are offering a unique and hands-on way to find out: The Abington Township Fire Department *Firefighter Experience*.

Those who sign up for the two-and-a-half-hour event will don turnout gear - including bunker pants, coat, helmet, and air pack - and crawl through a building filled with smoke. They will be hoisted into the air in the bucket of a tower ladder truck. They will feel the weight of the fire hose and the pressure of the water as part of a team that puts out a car fire. They will use hydraulic rescue tools - commonly called the Jaws of Life - to cut apart a car. And they will use an axe and halligan bar to break down a door, simulating the circumstances that firefighters face in rescue operations.

"We are really going to push the limits to let them experience what we do," said Weldon Fire Company Captain Jon Gerhard, one of the volunteer firefighters building the program. "It's going to be really fun. And we're hoping that after learning what volunteer firefighting is all about, people who attend the *Firefighter Experience* will want more of it, and will join."

While participants will have a tremendous amount of fun, the *Firefighter Experience* is not just a night or weekend adventure, Gerhard stresses. The free-to-participants experience is an investment in the future of the five fire companies that comprise the Abington Township Fire Department (A.T.F.D.) Across the country, there's a fear that the volunteer fire service is dying. "In Abington Township, we are not going to let it die," Gerhard said. "We're going to do something about it."

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Our Mission: The Abington Township Fire Department is a dedicated team of volunteer firefighters comprised of five individual fire companies unified as one department with a mission to provide excellent fire, rescue, fire prevention, and public education services to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community.



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The *Firefighter Experience* program was the idea of and will be led by volunteer firefighters from Abington Township Fire Department's five fire companies: Abington, McKinley, Weldon, Edge Hill, and Roslyn. It will be offered at least twice – once on a weekday evening, and once on a Saturday morning. Each class will be limited to 30 people. If more than 60 people sign up, additional sessions will be added, Gerhard said. Participants must be at least 18, must live in or work in Abington Township, and must be physically able to safely take on the physical challenges that the experience offers – carrying 40 pounds, crawling on the ground, and climbing a ladder, to name a few. Those who sign up will receive more information so they can participate with confidence.



Keeping themselves and others safe is at the core of everything Abington firefighters do, and the *Firefighter Experience* is no exception. Each session will begin with an orientation session and instruction. The current volunteers, all of whom have had extensive training and certification, will demonstrate each skill and will be there with those trying them out for the first time.

In addition to the excitement and adrenaline that participants will experience from trying the hands-on components of fire and rescue, they will also get a taste of the constant learning, camaraderie, and support that make being an Abington Township firefighter so rewarding on non-emergency days.

"There really is nothing like being a volunteer firefighter," Gerhard explained. "It's exciting. It's important. It's rewarding. And you gain a whole firehouse full of friends, too. We hope those who've ever thought about being a volunteer will come out and try it."

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the dates for the program have not been finalized. Anyone who is interested should watch the A.T.F.D. website and follow the A.T.F.D. on Facebook for future announcements and a sign-up form. Firefighters will also distribute information at community events.



A.T.F.D. Open Houses

Abington Township Fire Department's five fire companies opened their doors to neighborhood kids and families for fire prevention week in October.



A.T.F.D. Volunteers Donated Over 25,000 Hours of Service to the Township in 2019

Here's a snapshot of some of the many ways volunteers from the Abington, McKinley, Weldon, Edge Hill, and Roslyn fire companies served township residents in 2019.

Emergency Responses:

1,633

Hours spent responding to emergencies:

10,078

Hours spent in training:

6,888

Community & administrative service hours:

4,428

Total volunteer hours provided:

25,254

