

A Firefighter's Day

Firefighter's work a 24-hour shift that often occurs on weekends and occasional holidays. Typically, firefighters will be scheduled a minimum of ten shifts each month on designated days at their assigned fire station.

Firefighters may occasionally be "held over" where they are required to work even if they are not scheduled for the day. Some fire departments even require that they may need to spend up to 14 or more days away from home during extreme emergency situations.

Firefighters are expected to report for duty by 7 a.m., and sometimes earlier during an emergency. Throughout the shift, firefighters must be ready to respond to emergencies at a moment's notice. The vast majority of responses are for emergency medical services. Detailed below is an example of the daily routine at a fire station. Any of these activities may be interrupted due to an emergency call for service.

7 a.m. Shift Change

Firefighters arrive at the fire station to relieve the personnel from the previous shift. After receiving a briefing from the crew they are relieving, firefighters begin checking their equipment, including their personal protective equipment, and prepare for morning briefings.

Morning briefing is a meeting usually conducted at the kitchen table by the fire officer to discuss the day's agenda and other information, including inspections, drills, fire station projects, chores, and community events among other activities. The fire service is a paramilitary organization with a chain-of-command structure, and firefighters follow the fire officers' orders.

8:30 a.m. Physical Fitness

Firefighters receive time for exercise (cardio, strength training) in the morning to maintain a healthy level of fitness.

10 a.m. Clean Up and Housework

The fire station is a public facility and a firefighter's home away from home. The public entrusts us to maintain the fire station. After physical fitness, personnel change into their proper uniforms. Firefighters will clean the fire station, fire apparatus, and equipment. All fire stations have a cleaning schedule with assignments.

11 a.m. Food Shopping

The crew and assigned cook for the day will take the fire apparatus to the market and shop for groceries in order to be readily available to respond to a call.

Noon Lunch

1 p.m. Clean Up

2 p.m. Daily Work

The crew may conduct fire prevention inspections, give fire safety presentations, take care of that day's weekly house duty, or participate in a training drill, among other activities.

5 p.m. Dinner Prep

6 p.m. Dinner and Clean Up

7 p.m. Work Duties/Personal Time

Firefighters check their department e-mail and participate in online training. Firefighters may exercise again (if the morning routine was interrupted by emergency responses), watch television, or use time for personal development. Probationary firefighters use this time to study.

10 p.m. Sleep/Rest

Most firefighters try to get some sleep around 10 p.m. There is no guarantee that they will receive a full night's sleep. Firefighters are expected to respond to emergencies throughout the 24-hour shift, regardless of the time. If the crew responds to numerous calls overnight, firefighters will need to catch up on sleep on their days off.

6:30 a.m. Wake-Up Bell

The station's firefighters wake up. They remove their bedding and prepare to brief the next shift's firefighters, who are now arriving at the station.

A Firefighter's Schedule

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

A SHIFT B SHIFT C SHIFT –

The schedule shown is one example of a typical monthly work schedule. You are assigned to a particular shift (A, B or C) and expected to work your designated shift days, even if they fall on a holiday or weekend. One full shift is 24 hours.