

The life of a Firefighter

Protects life and property and extinguishes fire

■ Firefighting is a dangerous occupation. Firefighters must enter burning structures, and once inside, they search for victims, the source of fire, and ways to extinguish the fire. In this process, the firefighters are exposed to extreme heat, smoke and fumes.

Fire fighting is an extremely physically demanding occupation. It is not uncommon for a firefighter to carry 40–50 kgs /90-110 lbs of equipment, such as hoses, axes, ladders, chain saws and extinguishers into and around the fire scene. It may also include climbing up and down stairs and ladders.

Firefighters make forced entries into buildings by cutting locks, breaking doors, windows or roofs in order to gain access to, or ventilate, structures. This may involve using hand tools such as axes, sledge hammers, battering rams and power tools.

Nowadays, firefighters do not only put out fires. They also perform tasks much alike those of the paramedics. Being first on the scene, they give first aid and assess victims general condition by checking pulse rate, respiration, bleeding, consciousness etc. This requires physical contact with the casualties, often bleeding from open wounds, having broken bones or other severe injuries.



On top of all these stress factors, firefighters may also discover casualties who have died before being rescued. Sometimes, too, victims will die despite the best efforts of the firefighter.

While at a fire scene, fire fighters must constantly evaluate personal safety by examining structures for cracks, breaks, charring or partial collapse.



Today's firefighter faces an ever growing number of hazards. Many of these hazards are obvious – the direct contact with fire, the excessive amounts of heat and the enormous physical burden that the firefighters accept in the course of their duties. In past times, firefighters were known as "smoke eaters" as tradition dictated a cadre of individuals that could undertake rescues under the worst of fire conditions with little or no protection. However

as technology advances, fire fighting has become more of a science than an art. This fire science teaches us that we must approach fire fighting in different and safer way. Firefighters wear protective clothing and self contained breathing apparatus to limit their exposure to various hazards on the fire ground. Yet, firefighters can equally be exposed to hazards off the fire ground.



Firefighter's exposure to diesel fuel emission from fire apparatus within the fire station represents a significant hazards within the fire service. Continued exposure to diesel fuel emissions has been linked to cancer and other serious health disorders.

Fire departments must today take active measures to reduce this exposure. ***Only proven source capture methods offer economical and practical means to virtually eliminate firefighter's exposure to diesel exhaust.***

