



TOWN OF CANTON VOLUNTEER Fire & EMS Department

Valuing Life...at a Moment's Notice



Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department Answers Your Top Ten Questions

Ever wonder what it would be like to search for, then rescue a child lost in the woods? How about working in 1,000 degree heat to save a neighbor's home from being destroyed by fire? Or what about extricating then stabilizing an injured family after a motor vehicle accident - on Route 44, during rush hour traffic? Well, you're not alone.

Over the years, I've been asked dozens of questions by people interested in the work of the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department. Your questions demonstrate an ongoing interest in how and why Canton's volunteer firefighters, EMTs and Fire Police do what we do for you and our neighbors, every day, all day.

So, with that in mind, I want to share the top 10 questions I've been asked - the ones that come up over and over again - to help you learn more about the Department's volunteers, our work and maybe even get you interested in joining us.

(1) What's the Difference Between a Volunteer and a Professional Firefighter?

Nothing. The same professional, state-certified training is available to all firefighters in Connecticut. Canton's firefighters, like 70% of all firefighters in the U.S., are volunteers so they do not receive a salary for their work, unlike 'career' firefighters who do.

(2) Isn't Firefighting Dangerous?

Yes it is. Because this work can be hazardous, we are committed to ensuring that all volunteer firefighters are well trained and mentored. The Department pays for all training and we use the same national, quality standards that career departments receive at the State Fire Academy, from OSHA and the National Fire Protection Association. We also provide weekly fire drills to ensure that our volunteer firefighters are able to take appropriate action and respond to the needs of our neighbors at a moment's notice.

(3) What Do Canton's Volunteer EMTs Do?

Our volunteer EMTs responded to over 700 emergency calls last year. They receive the same level of professional training that firefighters do which prepares them to respond to a wide variety of medical emergencies from cuts and scraps to delivering babies.

(4) How Many Fire Departments Does Canton Have?

One. The Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department is made up of two divisions – one Fire, one EMS – and operates out of three fire stations that serve the unique needs of Canton, North Canton and Collinsville.

(5) What Kind of People Join the Department?

All kinds. Over the years, our membership has welcomed small business owners, single moms and dads, insurance professionals, nurses, teachers, coaches, construction workers, fathers and sons, lawyers, college students and your neighbors.

(6) What Types of Skills Do I Need to be a Firefighter or EMT?

Like any work that requires mental and physical agility, we encourage members to follow an exercise regimen that includes aerobic, flexibility and weight training. We also value the diverse skills and life experiences of our members, and welcome the opportunity to further enhance those talents with our professional training, resources and tools.

(7) What's the Time Commitment Required to be a Volunteer EMT or Firefighter?

While the Department is prepared to serve and protect Canton, North Canton and Collinsville 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, actual participation is flexible within a member's lifestyle, family responsibilities and work schedule. We ask volunteer interior and exterior firefighters to respond to at least 15% of all fire calls in a given year. In addition, volunteer firefighters must attend at least 50% of scheduled training drills.

EMS volunteers commit to being on call during 12 hour duty shifts. Most of our EMTs respond from their homes to the station. EMTs also must attend at least 50% of training drills specific to patient care.

(8) How Can I Get A Preview of the Work Involved in either EMS or Firefighting?

Visit our website at www.cantonfireandems.org, or drop by the Collinsville, or Canton firehouses any Monday evening during the Department's weekly training drill at 7:30 p.m. On any given week, we may be training on the river, in the woods or in town.

(9) What are the Biggest Issues Facing the Department Today?

Budget constraints. Recruitment of new members. Retention of current members. We have a wealth of experienced firefighters who may be retiring within the next five years.

(10) What's the Best Safety Advice You can Offer Canton Citizens?

Wear safety belts. Don't drive distracted. Don't drink and drive. Install a smoke-carbon monoxide alarm on every floor of your home. Learn CPR. Wear personal floatation devices when by the water. Have your chimney inspected once a year. Use prescribed medications as directed. Don't be afraid to call 9-11, because every minute counts.

I hope these questions and responses have whet your appetite to find out more about Canton's Volunteer Fire & EMS Department. We don't do this work to be called heroes. We do it because we want to support our community in a very significant way; a way, I believe, that is worth your time and talents as well.

I continue to welcome your questions and comments. Please feel free to contact me, Chief Richard Hutchings at (860) 777-5836. I look forward to speaking with you.

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