

Being a Volunteer with the Trinity Center Volunteer Fire Department Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Is it dangerous to respond to emergency calls?** Answer: There certainly can be hazardous circumstances in emergency situations. The first responsibility of responders is to “assess the scene” and look out for their own safety. We also work as a team to keep everyone safe. Our safety is usually directly linked to how careful we are and how we work together as a team. Training also is focused on how to avoid injuries.
2. **How much time will be required?** Answer: Generally we have 70 to 100 calls a year (6 to 9 calls a month). Calls usually last 1 to 2 hours, although on occasion they can last considerably longer, especially on fires. Participation in regular training will normally consist of three 2-hour sessions a month. Extra training time is required for initial certification to be a First Responder or EMT.
3. **Will I have to be “on call” continuously?** Answer: All responders will have periods when they cannot respond for many reasons. Generally if a responder is going to be gone from the area or will be involved in activities that prohibit responding, they simply let the chief know that they will not be available. Most of the responders drink on occasion, and in those circumstances they cannot respond – there is nothing wrong with that. It is a team effort and the team generally works to accommodate the needs of each individual.
4. **What skills will I need and how do I get them?** Answer: There are numerous skills required, both for fighting fires and for providing emergency medical services. On-going, in-house training is provided for all volunteers. The department has 2-hour training sessions the first three Wednesdays of the month and volunteers must attend most of the training sessions. To be a First Responder or EMT, volunteers must attend classes and get tested for certification.
5. **Does the department want female volunteers/responders?** Answer: The department absolutely wants both male and female responders. Female volunteers can do everything that the males can do and having female responders is especially important when treating female patients.
6. **How strong do I have to be?** Answer: Volunteers must be fit enough to get around on uneven terrain carrying small to moderate loads. For heavier loads there will be multiple people available to handle the weight. Volunteers don’t have to be especially strong, but they do need to be able to handle moderately strenuous situations.
7. **Are there any special perks for volunteers?** Answer: There are some perks for volunteers such as discounts at certain local vendors and recognition by the community, but the real perk is knowing that you are filling a critical need for the community.
8. **Do volunteers get paid anything?** Answer: None of the VFD members are paid. Their compensation is feeling good about helping the community and being there for our friends and neighbors when they are in special need. They also benefit from the special skills learned which can help in many personal situations.

9. **I am not sure that I can handle both medical and fire call responsibilities.** Answer: Some of our volunteers are not comfortable with one or the other of these kinds of emergencies and the department will not force people to respond to emergencies they are not comfortable with. Some volunteers are just medical and some are just fire.
10. **What if I am a part time resident or gone a lot?** Answer: This depends on how much time the person will be in the area. It is difficult to maintain skills without practice and training. The department requires that members be present at 60% of the trainings and EMT recertification requires 24 hours of training every two years (most gotten in the weekly training sessions). It is also important to the department's teamwork that people be present enough that the rest of the team is comfortable working with the individual in emergency situations. Bottom line is that you need to be here most of the year.
11. **What if I work?** Answer: This is not a problem. Many of the current volunteers are actively employed. It is common for a member to have certain periods of the day when they cannot respond. From the department's perspective, it is better to have responders available only 16 hours a day (give or take) as opposed to never. Again this presumes that they will be able to participate in the training regularly.
12. **What is the personal liability assumed by volunteers?** Answer: Emergency responders are covered by the "Good Samaritan" law and generally don't have personal liability as long as they stay within approved training and scope.
13. **What is required to drive the VFD vehicles?** Answer: Driving the ambulance requires that the individual either be an EMT or be within one year of becoming one. It also requires passing a DMV written test and a TC Sherriff's office finger print and background check. Driving the large fire trucks also requires passing a written DMV test and certification by the TCVFD Fire Chief.
14. **If I join, what will I be able to do right away?** Answer: After joining the VFD volunteers will be able to begin training and responding to emergencies. Initially duties will be primarily to support the more experienced personnel, but responsibilities will increase quickly as the volunteer gains skills and experience.
15. **What if I can't fight fires or respond to medical emergencies?** Answer: The department can use help in many ways besides responding to the emergencies. There is the Fire Emergency Assistance Team (FEAT) which does many things ranging from administrative duties to search and rescue assistance to traffic control for emergencies. There are also administrative duties and other jobs related to maintaining the facilities and equipment that could support the fire department.