

Ask the Fire Chief.....

Questions 1 through 6

**Charlotte County Fire/EMS
Fire Chief Dennis DiDio**



So many times our citizens have questions about Charlotte County Fire/EMS. Inquiries range from Fire/EMS operations and training, fire extinguishers, Do Not Resuscitate Orders, hospital transportation, billing information, to knowing when an emergency warrants calling 911. This newspaper column will give our public another option to ask a question and general public the opportunity view the answer.

These questions can be submitted to Dee Hawkins, Public Information/Education Coordinator by mail, e-mail or telephone at the below contact numbers. This column will run monthly and one or more questions or concerns will be addressed.

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "Why does a Fire Engine respond to Medical Emergencies and vehicle collisions?"

Answer:

There are many different reasons why Fire Engines respond to emergencies with the rescue. Some of the Department engines are Advance Life Support Engines, which means that there is a paramedic on board to begin rapid treatment of medical or injury emergencies. If an ALS Engine is closest to the emergency and can arrive on scene before the rescue then treatment can start immediately. Sometimes the units will arrive at the same time. If the emergency is life threatening, both units will respond and utilize all personnel to care for the patient.

On vehicle collisions, fire engines respond in order to check for hazards and are utilized in situations where extrication is necessary.

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "When 911 Emergency is called, can the dispatcher identify where the call is coming from?"

Answer:

In Charlotte County, we are fortunate to have the 911 enhanced system. This system allows the 911 dispatchers to know the location of the incoming calls when the caller is using a regular phone. The dispatcher cannot identify the caller's location when a call is made from a cell phone. This includes cell phones with a GPS. The location the dispatchers can identify is the cell phone tower that the cell phone is transmitting from during the phone call. This location could be miles away from the caller. The dispatcher will still verify needed information with the caller while dispatching emergency units to your emergency.

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "Is Charlotte County Fire / EMS the only Fire Department in Charlotte County?"

Answer:

In Charlotte County there are three paid fire departments. Charlotte County Fire / EMS Punta Gorda Fire Department, which responds to incidents in the City of Punta Gorda and Englewood Area Fire Control District, which responds to incidents in a portion of West Charlotte County and the southwest area of Sarasota County. Charlotte County Fire/EMS is the only Fire/EMS Department that holds the Certificate of Need that allows Charlotte County Fire / EMS to respond to Emergency Medical calls. These two other Fire Departments respond to medical calls in the capacity of first responders or as backup for additional

personnel. Charlotte County. Fire/EMS has Advanced Life Support ambulances, which are now referred to as rescues and ALS Fire Engines. Every ALS unit has a State Certified Paramedic to provide our public with advanced care before they reach the hospital.

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "Does Charlotte County Fire/EMS check or refill fire extinguishers, and when purchasing a fire extinguisher for a residential home, what should a person know before making a selection?"

Answer:

In Charlotte County, Charlotte County Fire/EMS does not fill fire extinguishers. Local companies are able to provide that service for residents. When purchasing a fire extinguisher you will want to purchase the extinguisher that is right for your home. The average home can utilize a "Class A-B-C Extinguisher" that is a multi purpose extinguisher and can be used on types of fires found in the home. You will also want to consider the capabilities of the people in the household that will be using the extinguisher, the size of your home and where to place the extinguishers. Some of the locations to keep your extinguishers are near or in the kitchen, laundry room and garage. Purchasing and positioning your extinguishers is the easy part of your fire safety plan. Make sure everyone in the home knows how to use it if the need arises. Use the word PASS to help you remember.

P stands for **PULL** the pin to unlock the extinguisher

A stands for **AIM** it at the bottom of the fire. You will want to be 6-10 feet away.

S stands for **SQUEEZE** the lever to release the contents of the extinguisher.

S stands for **SWEEP** the spray from side to side until the flames are gone.

Remember, if the fire is not easily extinguished, get out and stay out and call 911!

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "Why are fire trucks and rescues at the grocery stores during the day, don't they bring their own food and isn't that a waste of fuel?" Why can't just one person go to the store in a separate vehicle?

Answer:

In Charlotte County, Fire/EMS units are allowed one visit to the grocery store once a shift for meals. Not all stations use the privilege every shift, but most of the large stations with many personnel do. These firefighters and paramedics are on shift for 24 hours every third day, however some personnel are asked to stay an additional shift that they did not expect to work due to someone calling in sick. So they might not have brought enough food for the additional shift they are requested to work.

Stations with many personnel usually plan their meals as a group and shop once a day. There is only one kitchen in each station. It makes mealtime much easier and more efficient when one meal is cooked instead of many individual meals. The engine and rescue companies take the apparatus to the store so they will remain in service for emergency calls. If only one person went to the store in a smaller vehicle, and an emergency call came in, then the closest unit could not respond to the call without all of the personnel on board. Most engine/rescue companies combine the visit to the store with other duty oriented tasks, so the personnel are either on their way to or from the station from inspections or training. Many times, more often than you would think, their food is prepared, on the table to eat, and the alarms sound. When the crew returns, their food is not able to be eaten, so the crews can either try to order in but then they risk the chance of not being there when food is delivered. If a call comes in when they are shopping, then they can leave the grocery cart and return after the call.

It is very important that these fire and EMS units stay in service in order to respond to the needs of our community when our residents need us.

QUESTION:

Chief DiDio, "Why are fire trucks and rescues at businesses for Fire Safety Inspections?"

Answer:

All Charlotte County Fire/EMS engine and rescue companies are required to do inspections. This policy works very well for the safety of our community. When engine and rescue companies inspect local business it first fills the County requirement that states all businesses must pass an annual inspection. It

is physically impossible for the Fire Marshall and his two inspectors to inspect every business in the County, so the engine and rescue companies help with the work load while on duty in between responding to emergencies. This also gives the engine and rescue companies the opportunity to get to know the proprietors in their districts. While viewing these businesses the emergency crews are able to become familiar with the layout of the building, the contents of the structure and take note of any hazards that can be of concern. Because of the diversity of businesses in our area, emergency crews take note of the many different contents of each building while providing our business owners with education on fire safety and injury prevention.

Please submit your questions and concerns by mail, e-mail, or telephone to:

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