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English 1210

9/20/10

Fire Fighters Set Ablaze

Television and reality are similar and different. Let me explain. On television, they seem to take the real good or real bad out of everything. The media has a way of blowing everything out of proportion. Their facts that are gotten on the fly, right after, or even during a fire, often lack substance. Many times their information comes from bystanders and not from the professionals who really know the story. Coming from a family that has two firefighters, and one more on the way, I know first hand how different the media version is from the real world.

Television can portray situations however they want. Reporters can make a standard type house fire seem like the block is ablaze. They can report people were seen running from the building. "Could be an arson fire", they report. It also could be that any normal person, who is able, would be running out of a burning structure! They might jump out of a four-story building, screaming. But, if you really think about it, is that usual? Of course, you are panicked. Your house is on fire!

Television makes it seem like firefighters have never been in a blaze like this one. The reality is they deal with this kind of controlled chaos everyday. Though the television shows make you think that saving people is a simple matter of running in, grabbing a crying person and running out. The reality is more like this. You are weighted down with ninety pounds of bulky equipment. It's always hot and dark. So smoky, you can't see your hand in front of your face, let alone a crying person. You are not running in a fire. You are crawling; in hopes of finding a doorway to where someone may be. The fire is loud, the sirens are blaring. Your captain is

telling you through your outdated walkie-talkie to crawl to the second floor bedroom; there might be someone home. His voice sounds more like Darth Vader than what you see on television. If you are physically fit, it isn't so bad to crawl around a black, smoky, hot home trying to find a stairwell to climb to the second story. It isn't very often, you see a news story with pictures of a dirty smoke covered firefighter gasping for air after coming out of a fire empty handed. This is more reality than a firefighter carrying out a beautiful woman, from a blackened building, spotlessly clean.

Another misleading area is the amount of firefighters and equipment sent on a run. It would appear they have a lot of people to put out the fire with all that equipment. The reality is they need lots of trucks, because their manpower has been cut. The departments are now ruled by the budgets before safety. There may be only two men on a truck and one must stay with the truck to run the water and hoses. This situation, and the nature of the job cause firefighters to be on and extremely close bunch. Their lives depend on each other.

Sometimes firemen are looked down upon, with people saying they are lazy and watch T.V. all day long. The things that most people don't see are the times in the dead of a bitterly cold night when they have to jump up, get dressed, and race to the scene of an emergency. They will never know if that day will have eighteen runs, or eight. They still must be prepared for whatever they are needed for.

Say John Doe drives by a fire hall. He sees one guy washing the truck, one guy putting items in the rig, another one sitting in a chair writing something. Some folks might not see what is really going on. The trucks must be washed after every run. It's not done to waste time and water. The medics could be restocking their supplies on the truck. The officer could be filling

out the paperwork that is necessary to keep track of injuries and other important data. He may just choose to sit in the fresh air outside to do it.

Another misconception the television shows promote is that all firefighters are in there twenties, physically fit, and sexy looking. Of course, reality is different. The men and women of the fire service are extremely diverse. There are a few twenty year olds, but most of the family of fire is as different as America. All have two families, blood relatives and fire families.

Some stations have a dog to look after. But it probably a pit bull or a German shepherd to help watch over the station which is very vulnerable to robberies after the trucks leave.

All in all, I'd like to say that firefighting in real life and the media version are very different. Most of the time, the overall picture is right spot on. It's the little details that are so far off. It all depends on if you take the time to find out about it. It can be exhilarating, adrenaline rushing, and nerve racking exhaustion. I took the time to find out the differences and I made my own judgment, will you?