

Accomplish more by keeping structure and organization in your day

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Time seemed to go by quickly when employed by the fire service, but I can still recall the first day I walked into the fire station after completing the fire training college — as it was called back in the day — some 36 years ago.

As a probationary firefighter (known in my department as a "boot"), we

were given many tasks that needed to be completed during a tour of duty. We were expected to participate and volunteer for anything and everything. I had developed a routine that helped me finish my probationary period and then go on to "permanent" status employment. Below is how a typical day went for me, considering there were few or no alarms.

After morning roll call at 7:30 a.m., I placed my firefighting gear on my assigned apparatus and then went to my assigned detail. For the most part, I was responsible for the bathrooms or dining room area.

After completing my detail, I went out and assisted the driver of the truck to which I was assigned — helping mop the floor, cleaning the apparatus, doing inventory or tool/equipment maintenance, etc. After a certain amount of time, I was shown a few things about the truck from the assigned driver.

After morning details, we did building inspections. Once building inspections were completed around 10:30 a.m., we returned to the fire station where I helped the cook prep lunch. After lunch, I was the first person in the kitchen to help clean the dishes, dry, mop, wipe, etc. I relieved the watchperson in the watch cage, the area where we received the phone calls, turned on the speakers for alarms, called personnel, took blood pressures, etc.

From about 1-4 p.m., I would do the required reading assignment due for the month. We later were tested and graded on the material. At around 4 p.m., the whole station did physical training. We had an area with a pool, tennis courts and a track, where we did an exercise of our choice.

At around 5 p.m., we returned to "quarters" (the fire station) where I assisted the cook with dinner as I did for lunch, both prep and cleanup. Dinner was served traditionally at 6 p.m. After dinner, I practiced my assigned drill for the day — tools, ropes and knots, hose rolls, ladders and ladder raises, etc. The typical firefighter stuff!

At about 8 p.m., I went to the gym to do my workout and weightlifting. At around 9-9:30 p.m., I completed my daily activity log/sheet detailing what I had done/accomplished. At this point, after showering, cleaning and freshening up, I went to bed, around 10-10:30 p.m.

This was the perfect day for me. At times, there were practices and drills to participate in, along with fires and alarms/calls. When these events

occurred, there was a "make-up" period to assure I got all my assignments completed for each month of probation.

Many challenges I faced involved trying to find other firefighters to help me when an extra hand was needed as in two-man ladder raises or hose evolutions requiring the whole crew and apparatus. This was because I was the only "boot" assigned to my district on my shift. I did not have the luxury of having another probationary firefighter assigned to my district who I could call to work together.

During probation, a boot would get transferred every two months or so to another fire station, typically one of four within a district. The philosophy was to have different officers evaluate each boot so the training center could get different views of their performance and ability to work or "blend in" with different crews.

Each station had its own way of doing things and had their own distinct "personalities." The main thing was to be a team player and stay within the rules.

Having a routine, structured day in place helped with this change that occurred every two months. While a boot, you always were being scrutinized by officers and other firefighters at any particular station, especially during multicompany events or drills.

Showing that you are organized, keeping yourself busy, and being willing to learn gets noticed. It will help you succeed in your immediate goal and tasks before moving on to the next point in your career.

About the Author



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