



Cy-Fair's volunteer fire department is the largest in North America

Cy-Fair Volunteer Fire Department

The Largest in the Nation

Written by Laurie Roddy Photos by Britney Voelkel

For over 50 years, the Cy-Fair Volunteer Fire Department has been protecting the area. Each year they receive between 20,000 and 22,000 calls, they cover 156 square miles and over 400,000 residents. It's no wonder the time finally came to hire Cy-Fair's first full-time fire chief.

Cy-Fair's First Chief

Joe Davis has been a volunteer firefighter since 1990 and has served the Cy-Fair area as the volunteer fire chief since 2002. "It was taking about 80 hours a week," jokes Davis about his volunteer position. "Lucky for me, my real job was flexible and I was able to be fire chief in my spare time. Once my job situation changed, the Board (CDVFD Board) decided it was time to hire a full-time fire chief. We're the largest volunteer fire department in North

America," says Gail Schubot, President of the Cy-Fair VFD. "The need for a full-time fire chief became more important because the area has grown so much."

According to Davis, the population of Cy-Fair has more than doubled in size since 2000. "The Board told me they knew how much time I was putting in as a volunteer, and with my management background, they felt it would be difficult to find another volunteer fire chief," adds Davis.

A Dedicated President

Schubot has been a volunteer firefighter since 2000 and was elected the first woman president of the board of directors by the members of the Cy-Fair Volunteer Fire Department in 2007. She believes



Joe Davis is Cy-Fair's first full-time fire chief



Chief Davis recently presented Tim Green with a plaque honoring him as Firefighter of the Year



Lt. Matt DeLong and the other firefighters answer over 20,000 calls each year and serve more than 400,000 residents

Davis' challenges are the same as they've been the last few years – to recruit volunteers and to keep up with technology. “Back in the old days you got a call, jumped on the back of a fire truck, and put out a fire,” continues Schubot. “The hazards we face now are so much more dangerous and the types of risks have grown substantially. We have to be mindful of homeland security issues and train our people continually,” she adds.

Schubot, an attorney, volunteers weekly with the Cy-Fair VFD as a fire truck driver. She is a State of Texas Registered Firefighter and Registered EMT.

EMS and Firefighters

As a combination fire department (a department with both paid and volunteer firefighters), CFVFD has a budget of over \$10 million. This is considerably larger than any of the other 25 volunteer fire departments in Harris County. “We have 210 paid employees with 125 of them EMS and about 75 part-time firefighters that cover the area from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.,” says Davis. “Volunteers are on call at night and on weekends.”

Firefighter of the Year

One of those dedicated volunteers is Tim Green, who was recently honored as the 2009 CFVFD Firefighter of the Year. A volunteer since 1990 in several departments throughout the United States, Green joined Cy-Fair in 2004 at Station 7 in Fairfield. “I joined a rescue squad in Dayton, Ohio in 1990,” says Green. “When we moved here, I joined Station 7 because I wanted to help the community and give back.” Green modestly adds that the Firefighter of the Year Award could go to any of the 350 volunteer firefighters. “Why they picked me, I’m not sure,” laughs Green. Asked why he



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keeps putting in an average of 15 hours a week, Green simply says "I love to see a little boy tug on his dad's shirt, point to me and say 'Dad that's a fireman.' Just to see their faces when they see me is worth it," continues Green.

State of the Art Dispatch Center

One of Chief Davis' pride and joys is the dispatch center that was completed in 2006. "The dispatch center is one of the best in the country," brags Davis. "We have full-time personnel that dispatch for Cy-Fair and Rosehill. Other departments in the area want us to dispatch, but we don't want to dilute the service for this area," he adds.

The dispatch center, which is housed in a storm-proof building, can take a direct hit from a bomb if necessary. Considered secure, the center is also the emergency operation center during disasters. It had power and was functional before, during, and after Hurricane Ike.

With 12 fire stations located directly in neighborhoods, each station covers about 13 square miles. The City of Houston fire stations cover only about seven square miles each. "We work with the City of Houston and offer mutual aid," says Davis.

How to Become a Firefighter

To be as effective as Davis would like, the department needs to add 100 more volunteers to the existing 350. "We fully train and equip the volunteers," adds Chief Davis. "There's no out of pocket expense." In this age of giving back, what better way to volunteer than to fulfill the dreams of many young children and become a volunteer firefighter. **CFM**

Laurie Roddy has been a writer for over 25 years and authored the book, 60 Hikes Within 60 Miles: Houston.



Fire Safety Tips

for your Cy-Fair Family

- Plan a home fire drill with escape routes.
- Install smoke detectors and check them regularly for proper operation.
- Never leave candles burning unattended.
- Store flammables in a garage or shed in an approved storage container.
- Don't overload your electrical system by plugging in too many appliances at once.
- Teach each family member to "Stop, Drop, and Roll".
- Purchase a fire extinguisher and learn how and when to use it.
- If a fire starts, get out of your home and stay out.



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