



ENGINE 291 / LADDER 140

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INTRODUCTION

The New York Fire Department - Engine 291 - Ladder 140, located in Ridgewood Queens, is a prominent part of my neighborhood. Periodically, I'd listen to the fire truck siren, and see firefighters leisurely pace out on the street when I look out my window.

I have lived near the fire brigade for more than fifteen years, and I could not help but question: What is it like to be in the perspective of a firefighter? What are the most rewarding aspects of being involved in the fire and rescue service?

In our time, the fire service industry has changed and adapted exceedingly compared to back then. We see and hear on the news that firefighters rescue victims from burning buildings, accident sites, and other hazards, but who are these guys that will risk their lives to help other people?

Back in Kindergarten, I went on a school trip to the local firehouse and witnessed the beauty of being a fireman. I did not even recall this moment until I found an old photograph lying in my memory box. Hence, characteristics of nobility and heroism intrigued me to photograph them. I wanted to observe what they were like and how their multitude of self-esteem differs them from everyone else.

When we envision a typical firefighter, we often perceive them as robust, courageous, and compassionate about what they do. Firefighters are sought for help when there is an emergency. Unlike any other profession, they do not view their occupation as just “work” but as an expression of their identity. They always appear in an emergency when no one else will, care for and protect people all the time, and project this positive energy concerning the safety of someone else's life. If you were to applaud firefighters for all they do, they would believe they did nothing other than their job.

As a representation of the daily lives of firefighters, this photo essay illustrates the characteristics and features of NYC firefighters, naturally as I saw them. The scope of the photographs conveys their lifestyle in the firehouse and out on the street. In addition to capturing the type of work and gear they use, the images display the comradeship and brotherhood amongst the FDNY Engine 291 family and an outlook of why being a firefighter is worthwhile.



An outlook of a firefighter helmet positioned inside the fire truck.

Every fire department in New York distinguishes itself based on ladder and engine numbers across all five boroughs. Engine 291 refers to the fire engines which equip hoses and water to take out fires. Ladder 140 refers to fire trucks that carry ladders, rescue equipment, and other tools needed for an emergency.



“10-40 CODE 2”

Ryan Zuccaro receives a radio call about an electrical emergency. All FDNY use radio terminology to distinguish emergencies and a database to track the location of the situation.



Tamar Sawan starts the fire truck to depart for an emergency call.



An array of turnout coats hung on a rack. Turnout coats are layered with fire-resistant material that weigh about 20 pounds.



"Just another day on the job."

As firefighters throw on their apparel and head out to respond to an emergency, they often endure rough, horrific days. To deal with these situations, many have to balance and separate them to get on with their day. A firefighter is not like any other profession where they get time off; there is no time. After one call, they return to the firehouse and move on to the next call.



Mike Meyer (left), in uniform, sits inside the truck. Although fire trucks look large exteriorly, the interior is narrow for efficiency and ready-to-use equipment.



Cory Johnson checks fire extinguishers, along with a close view of his leg tattoos - a sign of brotherhood amongst the FDNY Engine 291 family.

Firefighter equipment is analyzed twice a week to ensure they operate when needed.



Ryan holds a pike pole, a recognizable tool in the firefighting service.

The pike pole's purpose is to search for fires between walls, ceilings, and roofs, to break windows for ventilation, and move items that may cause a hazard.

Ryan holds down a ladder as Caige
Moran climbs up.

Ground ladders are for rescue work,
access to higher altitudes (roofs, attics,
spaces that are difficult to reach), and
ventilation.





Caige Moran was assigned to the firehouse for five years after he graduated from Baruch College. Here we see him putting out a small fire with an extinguisher.



Ryan and Caige using a rotary saw and a halligan tool against a storefront gate.

These tools are prominent for forcible entry when normal means to enter confinement are locked or blocked.



A team of firefighters return from an emergency call.

When firefighters walk down the street, their service is often acknowledged, and people are grateful for everything they do. Firefighters continue to see their profession as just doing their job. The most rewarding part of their job experience is the look on people's faces when they appear in an emergency and the beneficial impact they employ.



Philip Cagnard checks the water supply
inside the engine truck.

At the end of every week, firefighters
inspect the engine truck to ensure
everything is functioning. The water is
pumped through fire hoses to fill the
500-gallon water tank.

Bart Sagan, born in Poland,
moved to Ridgewood Queens
fifteen years ago and was
assigned to the firehouse for
five years.

“I always wanted to be a
firefighter.. It was my dream...
that was the only option for me
actually. I did not want to do
anything else.”





From left, Jason Mendez, Bart, and Ting Lei prepare a meal in their kitchen.

Bart: “The most rewarding aspect of my career is this job, in general... working with these people... it is a very tight and friendly group of people. I don’t think I had any disappointments so far, nothing, its just everyday I have a big smile on my face and that’s it.”

An outlook of the dining area adjacent to the kitchen.

Gino Vaccaro (right) mentions becoming a fireman is a “happy ending story” because he gets to work in the neighborhood where he grew up.

“We work days, nights, 9 hour shifts, 15 hours shifts, 24-hour shifts, we get dozens of calls in and out at the same time... this is basically our home because we are at the majority of the time here.

This is why they call it the firehouse.”





A memorial
commemorating Patrick
John Lyons (left) and John
P. Napolitano (right), who
served during 9/11.



There has been a drastic change in the types of fires and emergency calls firefighters receive.

For instance, electric bikes and scooters have become a hazard. Firefighters are prepared to combat these fires by ensuring they wear oxygen masks, and it's crucial to leave them on even if the fire is out.

Many firefighters noted that it's nice to have a career that they do not have to be ashamed of and offers high levels of job satisfaction.

Anthony Argona: “My grandfather was a fireman. He passed away when I was 3-years-old. It’s a story I did not really grow up with. Knowing that my grandfather was a firefighter lit a fire under the wheel of what I wanted to do with my life.”





From left, Kam Chang, Bart, Caige, Paul Gianatiempo, Ting, and Ryan have a good laugh on a Sunday night.

Kam: "We like to mess around and prank each other all the time. There's always something new to joke about."

