

Firefighters in Va. reinstated after reportedly rushing toddler to hospital in fire engine

by Diane Cho, WJLA
Wed, March 9th 2016, 7:48 AM EST



Firefighters in Va. reinstated after reportedly rushing toddler to hospital in fire engine (WJLA)



STAFFORD CO., Va. (WJLA) - Two volunteer firefighters that were first put on non-punitive administrative leave for their life saving actions have now been reinstated, the fire department says.

"Any time we have an incident under review that we deem significant, we place the personnel, volunteer or career, on non-punitive administrative leave," he said. "This differs from suspension in that suspension is a disciplinary action and punitive in nature," Stafford County Fire Chief Mark Lockhart said. "We have taken no disciplinary action at this time."

A couple called 9-1-1 on Saturday, February 27 as they say their 18-month-old was having a seizure.

Stafford County firefighters arrived, picked up the toddler and rushed her to the hospital in their fire engine; something that is strictly against the department's policy.

Captain James Kelley told us he wouldn't change anything about the decision he made last month to rush a toddler to the hospital in his fire engine.

"10 out of 10 times, I would do the exact same thing. I'm 100 percent confident in what I did."

Kelley, a firefighter with Falmouth Volunteer Fire Department and a D.C. firefighter, responded to a call for an 18-month-old little girl who was having a seizure.

Kelley says when he got to the McDonald's on Ferry Rd., he found the child's father standing in the middle of the road with his daughter.

The father says when they were driving down the road, his daughter started vomiting and having convulsions. She was completely unconscious and unresponsive.

Kelley says he called dispatchers and was told the first Medic Unit was 12-15 miles away. Immediately after, he says he was told another unit said it was closer but never got their exact location. He says he also called for mutual aid from the city of Fredericksburg.

"With all of the radio confusion, basically the call got disconnected," Kelley says.

And that's when he says he made the decision to put the little girl in the fire truck and take her to the hospital.

While they were on their way, he says an ambulance wanted to meet them at the fire station, but he says it was out of the way so he denied the request.

The Fire Chief says that ambulance was less than two miles away at the time.

"That's one thing they teach you when you become an EMT, is children go downhill very quickly. Adults can compensate, children can't."

Kelley says on the way to the hospital, they placed the child on oxygen and she regained consciousness.

But that night, he found out he and his fellow firefighter were being placed on non-punitive administrative leave for their actions because the fire engine is a non-transport unit.

"We basically did the best with what we had and we went with it."

We have been told the young girl is recovering.

"She's doing great, and that's all that matters," Kelley says.

The family had this to say about the firefighter's decision to take their daughter to the hospital in a fire engine:

My wife and I feel terrible for the fallout that has happened to these two gentlemen. They simply had the best interests for our daughter's care in mind. We are extremely thankful they made the decisions they did, and that our daughter is back home with us doing well. The actions of these men represent a dedication to their mission, and a deep concern of doing what is best for the people they are serving. In our eyes they are heroes.

Today Stafford County Fire Chief Mark Lockhart spoke with the press, saying the reason this case came under review was because of the way the patient was transported to the hospital by way of fire engine instead of an ambulance.

The department's internal review is now complete. "We did, however, find that the department medical protocol for this type of patient was not followed and that will be addressed with the individuals involved."

He also says they are waiting for the report from the Virginia Office of EMS and will act on any recommendations that they may make or actions they may take.

Follow us on Twitter [@Local12](#) and [LIKE](#) us on Facebook for updates!

Download the Local 12 News App on [iTunes](#) and [Google Play](#)