

DESPITE TOP OF THE LINE EQUIPMENT, FIREFIGHTER'S JOBS REMAIN DANGEROUS

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OAK HILL-- We all know that running into a burning building is dangerous, but each time a firefighter leaves the station, they are putting their lives on the line.

“Pretty much anytime we go out on a call there are safety issues involved. Car wrecks, things of that nature. When we are working on a car wreck on Route 19 we have to divert traffic around us. We have had a firefighter get run over one night on a call,” Assist Fire Chief Robert Begley said.

While every call is dangerous, Begley says that fires will always be their biggest threat.

“Fires are a lot more dangerous these days due to building construction, due to things in your home, your furniture. It creates more toxic gases,” Begley said.

Begley says their equipment is truly the most important part of their job.

“We are pretty well protected, but still as of today there have been 21 firefighters killed in the U.S. this year. This is a very dangerous job. Anytime we leave the station we are taking a big risk.”

Firefighters are also required to complete hundreds of hours of training in an effort to help keep them safe. But for volunteer departments like Oak Hill that can also cut down on numbers.

“We used to have a waiting list. We don’t have a waiting list now. We have maybe 2 or 3 applications on file. We are down to 34 firefighters from 40,” Begley said. “With the training that you have to have



now to even ride on a fire truck, it's like a 120-hour course, it's hard to get young people to commit to a course that long just to get to ride on a truck."

So next time you hear sirens, remember that it's not just the victims lives who are at risk, but also the men and women there to help them.