

I had a very unique experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am a volunteer firefighter in my town, and just started my career in the fire service at the start of COVID-19. Being in lockdown, responding to calls of service for the town was my way of leaving my home. Not only did this give me a sense of more freedom, but allowed me to help others during this time of collective struggle. The policies at our department during the pandemic changed drastically. For instance, only four members were allowed on a truck at a time. This was put in place so that in the event that one of us was infected, the whole station would not be put in a two-week quarantine. Normally, we gather at the firehouse for drills, dinner, or to just enjoy time with each other. This was also prohibited. The only time we could see our brothers was when responding to an emergency. Upon dispatch, we would be notified if there was a COVID positive case in the residence we were going to. If there was, only two members would enter the home, again, to prevent mass infection within the department. There were many times I had to enter the home of someone who was COVID-19 positive. In these cases, I would be breathing air from my Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) or I would be wearing a N-95 mask. This prevented the possibility of transmission. We were also equipped with Tyvek suits. When we got back to the firehouse, the truck was disinfected with a chemical spray. For the future generations, it is important to know the sacrifice so many people made to help others. The pandemic not only changed the lives of the people in my town, but the lives of those who served them.