



Fireman James Jacobs inspects a hydrant Friday morning on South Clay Ave. Jacobs said checking hydrants is pretty simple, and how many hydrants are checked per day depends on any calls being made and how many hydrants are assigned.L&T photo/Giseelle Arredondo

## **Inspecting businesses to hydrants part of community's safety**

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

• Leader & Times

For "Shift B," a day begins at 6:50 a.m. or a little before with firemen Warren Headrick and Andrew Huelsman reading the log book, a journal of the happenings of the entire day for other shifts prior to theirs.

By 7 a.m., the rest of the men gather in the kitchen and drink coffee while Headrick and Huelsman inspect the trucks. The men check every compartment, every tool of the trucks. If there is a problem with any of the trucks, they report it.

Once cleaning and inspection is completed, the firemen drive down to south station to work out at 8 a.m. for one hour in the basement.

The men get drenched in sweat by doing Insanity, a DVD program that claims to be the hardest workout program ever put on DVD, and other workouts using a treadmill, doing stairs, carrying a hose, squats, bench press and push ups.



At about 9 a.m., The firemen get done working out at the south station. They “clean up,” change back into uniform. It is then time to go back to their own stations.

Headrick climbs into a fire truck and drives back to headquarters.

He waves at everybody on his way there.

“Wave. Wave at those guys right there,” he said, with a laugh.

“Wave at her too,” Headrick continued. “Wave at them. Aw, they weren’t looking.”

“Roll down your window, and tell her smoking will kill her,” he joked. “That stuff is nasty. Do you smoke? I smoke 10 packs a day.”

“Look, there’s James (Jacobs),” he said as soon as he spotted another fire truck turning onto 15th Street.

Once at the station, Capt. Jose Torres noted how busy the men are on shift duty,

“We stay pretty busy all day. People in the community will say, ‘You guys just stay in your stations, and sleep all day,’” which he added, “I wish. That would be awesome. Play video games all day.”

So the men don’t play video games?

“No, like right now, we have the guys doing inspections. Each month, we have one guy doing inspections and another guy is testing hydrants. And then after that, next month, they switch depending on what their job is and what’s going on. We stay pretty busy. The guy that was in here earlier (Jacobs) is getting his physical but he’s at the airport and he’s in charge of doing all of the runway checks there. We’ll go there after lunch, so that we can see the planes come in.”

Torres emphasized that they really don’t have time to play games.

“Sometimes we don’t even have time to sit down, get a bite real quick,” he said.

Huelsman added, "Head back out."

Torres continued, "We stay busy on most days. We do all of our maintenance. All of our cleaning,"

Torres then sent out the guys for inspections.

"You guys can go get started on a couple inspections, and I'd do at least the Salty Dog, and when you guys come back, James can go do some hydrants."

"You ready?" Headrick said and he quickly made his way to a truck.

On the road, Headrick noted when the shift is off duty they "hang out at each other's houses, have cook outs. Stuff like that."

During inspection of Salty Dog, Headrick noted he checks that the plug-ins are where they are supposed to be. A cord connected into an extension that is itself plugged in the wall is unacceptable. It's a hazard.

Any corrections that need to be made, Headrick records it in an iPad.

He also checks that the fire extinguishers are elevated from the floor and that they are properly labeled.

"We help them not get sued," Headrick said.

Ceiling tiles must also all be in place and not missing.

Any problems with the restaurant are recorded and rechecked after a certain period of time.

Headrick noted that if there is a problem, “someone will get sent back out in a year.”

Inspections of water hydrants and inspections of buildings continue until noon.

Even though the men can do a task by themselves, sometimes other firemen tag along, too.

The firemen work together and help each other out in any situation.

Fireman Scott Helberg from south station teamed up with Jacobs to inspect hydrants Thursday.

How many hydrants are checked per day depends on how many are assigned each month. The number is also affected by any calls or emergencies.

There are 80 hydrants for this month, with 49 pending inspections still needed to be completed in the next 15 days.

“Sometimes two, sometimes one. You never know how many inspections per day,” Jacobs said.

Jacobs walks up to a water hydrant, unscrews a couple of caps, attaches a couple of tubes, twists the top of a hydrant and a bunch of water gushes out onto the street.

He then checks the static pressure and residual pressure and submits the information in an iPad. Hydrants are rated as to their pressure, volume of flow and then caps are painted and color-coded.

Jacobs said that checking hydrants is pretty simple.

“Pretty much get paid to hang out with your friends,” he said, with a laugh.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the third article in an L&T series looking at the day in the life of a Liberal firefighter while doing shift duty.