



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

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Student Fire and EMS Squads: Learning and Giving Back

By Ken Holland, FF/NREMT-P, Senior Emergency Services Specialist, NFPA

While in my second year of college, I attended the University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire, my resident assistant (RA) was a member of a volunteer ambulance service that provided service to the university and the towns of Durham, Lee, and Marbury. After several conversations with her she convinced me to head on down to the station and see what it was all about and maybe volunteer my time to the organization. One of my concerns was that I had no formal training as an EMS provider and wondered what I could possibly offer the organization and the community in which they serve. She said that they would train me in whatever they could and point me to where I could get formal training, if I was interested. The trip down to the station changed my life as it propelled me into what has been a 22 span in EMS.

When I first went to college I had no idea that there was even a volunteer ambulance service in town as I thought it was run by the fire department. I also didn't know that there are so many student run fire and EMS squads throughout the country.



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Most of the fire and EMS squads are volunteer while some are not, but in either case it is the students that are providing a majority of the services.

While doing some research for this article, so as to not just have my own personal experience to write from, I was amazed at just how many student fire and EMS squads there are at colleges throughout the country. As was my experience, many of these organizations and educational institutions offer free training and certification to members so that they can in turn use those skills learned to give back to the community in which they serve. Some educational institutions even offer scholarships to students who want to become a part of a fire and EMS squad that is part of the college.

In many cases the involvement in a student fire and EMS squad can be used or seen as a stepping stone to what may be a full time career for some once they have completed college. It could maybe a stepping stone into a life of volunteering and community networking, or just an experience of personal enrichment. In any event, the act of becoming a part of a student fire and EMS squad can have so many positive attributes that can be lifelong in nature. Depending on how involved one wants to get, there is the opportunity to learn about the operations of the organization. This



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could include maintaining the proper certifications needed for the providers and the organizations to continue to provide a particular level of service. This could also include how to maintain staffing levels for the fire and EMS squad to ensure they can provide a consistent level of service. One might also be interested in learning about vehicle maintenance, which could include the purchasing of new vehicles, retirement of older vehicles, or the refurbishment of existing vehicles. I would be remiss if I didn't point out that the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has standards that cover many of these areas already, which is something else the student could be involved in. The point being is that there is much more than just providing the fire and EMS to the community, it is really up to the student to determine how involved they want to be.

So I would encourage the parents who will be sending their children off to college next fall to look into whether or not there is a student fire and EMS squad that they can become a part of. When we send our children off to college we want them to get the best education and learning experience that they can, experience a new chapter in their life as an adult, to grow as a person, and to also find a way to give back. What better way to experience all of that, and more, when there is the



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opportunity to be a part of a student fire and EMS squad? The learning experience and life experience that one will get from this, in my opinion and from my experience, will last a life time. The significance and simple act of volunteering and giving back to the community as a college student, especially as it relates to student fire and EMS squads, will plant the seed for a lifelong desire to stay connected and committed to the community in which they live in.



Ken is a Senior Emergency Services Specialist with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and he is involved in working with several technical committees that develop and maintain various safety standards revolving around Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health (FSOSH), the EMS community, Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF), and the new NFPA 1917, Standard for Automotive Ambulances. Ken has 22 years in EMS, of which 18 years he has devoted his time to being a paramedic. Before the NFPA, Ken was a member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Fire Department as a fire fighter/paramedic and the ALS coordinator for the department. Ken has his BA in Political Science and an MBA in Public Administration.

