

Pullman Fire Department
Frequently Asked Questions

- [Why do you send a fire truck along with an ambulance to a medical emergency?](#)
- [Why does the Fire Department bring the fire engine just for a simple inspection?](#)
- [Why do fire trucks go through town with lights & sirens sometimes and other times they seem to drive normal?](#)
- [Why do firefighters break out windows and cut holes in roof during a fire?](#)
- [Why do you block traffic lanes at auto accidents, sometimes more lanes than necessary?](#)
- [Why am I not supposed to drive over a firehose?](#)
- [Why do firefighters keep weeds and bushes away from fire hydrants?](#)
- [Why does my water turn brown when firefighters turn fire hydrants on?](#)
- [Can we have birthday parties at the Fire Station?](#)
- [Can you get my cat out of a tree?](#)
- [How do I schedule a Fire Drill?](#)
- [What if I smell Gas in my home?](#)
- [Why do firefighters work 24-hour shifts?](#)
- [What other responsibilities do firefighters have other than fighting fires?](#)
- [What should I do when I see or hear an emergency vehicle coming towards me when I'm driving?](#)
- [My smoke detector is chirping, what does that mean?](#)
- [How often should I change the batteries in my smoke detectors?](#)
- [Does the Fire Department fill fire extinguishers?](#)
- [Can I use a burn barrel or burn leaves in my yard?](#)
- [Can I have a bonfire or firepit in my backyard?](#)
- [I'm interested in becoming a Firefighter, where do I start?](#)
- [Can I ride along with the Fire Department?](#)
- [How much does an ambulance ride to the hospital cost? How about a Fire Truck responding to a fire?](#)
- [How do I sign up for a First Aid or CPR class?](#)
- [How do I Submit a question?](#)
- [Who do I contact if I have a complaint about my landlord?](#)
- [Does the fire department take needles for disposal?](#)
- [Do I have to evacuate a building when the fire alarm goes off?](#)

Why do you send a fire truck along with an ambulance to a medical emergency?

A lot of emergencies require more than the 2 people that respond with the ambulance to carry equipment and assist to safely transport the patient in awkward situations. Fire trucks also have emergency medical personnel & essential equipment and can get help to your location quicker sometimes. The ambulance will provide transportation to an emergency room depending on the nature of the call. All members of the Pullman Fire Department are certified Emergency Medical Technician's or Paramedics.

Why does the Fire Department bring the fire engine just for a simple inspection?

Two reasons: First, these inspections are conducted by on-duty engine companies that must be ready to respond to an emergency call from the field.

Second, an important part of the value of the public safety inspection is to familiarize your local firefighters with the buildings and business in Pullman. While they check for hazards and consult with business owners on how best to eliminate or minimize the likelihood of a fire, they also familiarize themselves with access points and the layout of the facility.

Why do fire trucks go through town with lights & sirens sometimes and other times they seem to drive normal?

When a call for service comes into our dispatch center (Whitcom) the dispatchers classify the nature of the call into either an emergency or non-emergency response prior to alerting the Fire Department, this is done to minimize the safety hazards associated with emergency responses of apparatus while at the same time assuring a prompt response. We will also turn off the lights and sirens at times when we are cancelled or someone deems it not necessary.

Why do firefighters break out windows and cut holes in roof during a fire?

Firefighters ventilate smoke, superheated, poisonous, or explosive gases for safety and visibility. This allows firefighters to get inside the building to find and extinguish the fire, thereby reducing property damage. This also reduces the chance of a possible dangerous explosion.

Why do you block traffic lanes at auto accidents, sometimes more lanes than necessary?

We block traffic lanes for the safety of our personnel and our patients. Blocking extra lanes keep our personnel safe when they go back to our apparatus to get more equipment and help protect the victim we are trying to stabilize. Over 25 firefighters are killed or injured each year while working at incidents on streets and highways.

Why am I not supposed to drive over a firehose?

Firefighters are very concerned about running over firehoses because the hose can be damaged and any firefighter at the end of a nozzle will have the water interrupted and possibly cause injuries or death. Any hose that is driven over without protection has to be taken out of service and tested.

Why do firefighters keep weeds and bushes away from fire hydrants?

Firefighters keep weeds and bushes three feet from fire hydrants for visibility and accessibility. If you have questions about a fire hydrant or to report a problem with a hydrant please call us at 332-8172.

Why does my water turn brown when firefighters turn fire hydrants on?

The fire department inspects fire hydrants each year for proper operation. We sometimes turn the fire hydrants on to make sure they operate properly. We turn the hydrants on slowly so as not to stir up the sediment that is in the pipes, but at times the sediment does get stirred up and the water coming out of your faucet can be brown in color. This also happens more in the summer time when the reservoirs are lower due to increased water use.

Can we have birthday parties at the Fire Station?

Unfortunately, we do not have the proper facilities to have birthday parties at any PFD Fire Stations. PFD does however offer citizens the option of scheduling a Birthday Tour at the local fire station of their choice. During Birthday Tours, Children and guests who join the birthday child also receive Junior Fire Badges and Coloring Books.

To schedule a Birthday Tour contact PFD Operations at 509-332-8172. Similar to Station Tours, Birthday Tours last approximately 30 to 45 min. Times may vary depending on the number and ages of the children attending.

Can you get my cat out of a tree?

The Fire Department does not assist in rescuing animals. Citizens may contact Animal Control. The telephone number is 338-3411.

How do I schedule a Fire Drill?

Training is provided by PFD. We can assist you in organizing and conducting an orderly evacuation, and evaluating results with management of the facility. To schedule a Fire Drill contact PFD Operations at 332-8172.

What if I smell Gas in my home?

You will need to get out of the house and then call 9-1-1 for the Fire Department from outside of the house or from a neighbor's house. The use of a phone could cause the gas to ignite if you called from inside the house.

Why do firefighters work 24-hour shifts?

Firefighters work 24-hour shifts, because unlike police, firefighters cannot go out and perform training, inspections etc. during the nighttime. It would take more firefighters to cover 8 hour shifts. Firefighters at Pullman work a 50 hour work week and the 24 hour shift allows this.

This type of schedule is the most cost-effective work schedule to provide fire protection and is the most common.

What other responsibilities do firefighters have other than fighting fires?

Emergency calls represents only about fifteen percent of the work of a typical fire department in Pullman. The number of residential and commercial fires has steadily decreased over the years due to a variety of factors including improvements in construction, a greater public awareness of the risk factors leading to fires and a significant reduction in smoking nationwide. Fires, however, are only some of the emergencies to which the Fire Department responds. Eighty percent of the Fire Department's emergency responses are, in fact, calls for medical aid, including illness/accidents at home and work, injuries resulting from vehicle accidents and interfacility transfers. Other calls for emergency response involve hazardous materials releases, technical rescues, response to fire alarms and other calls for public assistance. Firefighters also spend much of their time maintaining equipment, doing routine public safety inspections for businesses, training for all types of emergency responses and filling out the reports and paperwork associated with these activities.

What should I do when I see or hear an emergency vehicle coming towards me when I'm driving?

When it is safe to do so, you should pull over to the right and stop until all emergency vehicles have safely passed. If you cannot safely maneuver to the right, simply stop and stay stopped so the vehicles can go around you safely.

My smoke detector is chirping, what does that mean?

Most modern smoke detectors will chirp to alert you the batteries are low, you should replace the batteries and test your smoke detector. Smoke detectors can be purchased at any hardware or large commercial department store.

How often should I change the batteries in my smoke detectors?

We recommend you change the batteries in your smoke detectors every 6 months, an easy way to remember is to change batteries when you reset your clock for daylight savings time.

Does the Fire Department fill fire extinguishers?

PFD is not equipped to fill fire extinguishers at this time. However, you can find local fire extinguisher businesses in the yellow pages to refill them.

Can I use a burn barrel or burn leaves in my yard?

No, city ordinance prohibits outside burning within the city limits. The Whitman County Landfill takes leaves and yard waste free of charge.

Can I have a bonfire or firepit in my backyard?

The state of Washington has prohibited outside burning to cities the size of Pullman and the city has adopted this. Property owners may apply for a burn permit through the fire prevention office. The Whitman County Landfill takes leaves and yard waste free of charge. The county surrounding Pullman does allow burning within the rules of the Whitman County Fire District #12.

I'm interested in becoming a Firefighter, where do I start?

We hire reserve (volunteers that get paid hourly) firefighters each year and you can stop by the main fire station at 620 S. Grand for an application or print one off the [Reserve Program Webpage](#) . We establish a list for full time employee every two years and hire from that list. For employment information

check out our
[Employment](#)
page.

Can I ride along with the Fire Department?

Yes, Citizens can request to ride along on either an ambulance or a fire engine. For more information contact Operations at 332-8172.

How much does an ambulance ride to the hospital cost? How about a Fire Truck responding to a fire?

Ambulance services are billed per city adopted base rates and charges, the exact cost would be determined by the type of response and equipment or supplies used. Questions about ambulance billing can be forwarded to [Brenda Davison](#) . Fire Engines and Ladder Trucks are supported by taxpayer revenues and there is no charge for these pieces of equipment.

How do I sign up for a First Aid or CPR class?

PFD teaches these classes on a monthly basis, for a current schedule or to register call 332-8172 or visit our [Public Education](#) page.

How do I submit a question?

Email questions to [PFD Operations](#)

Does the fire department take needles for disposal?

Pullman Fire does NOT take needles for disposal. Residents of Pullman can contact Pullman Disposal Services to set up an account for needle disposal.

Do I have to evacuate a building when the fire alarm goes off?

QUICK ANSWER: Yes, the building has to be evacuated even if it believed to be a false alarm.

LONG ANSWER: When a fire department responds to a dispatched fire alarm whether it's an actual fire, EMS call, rescue call or false alarm the Incident Commander (fire department person in charge, IC) is granted temporary control over that emergency building fire, EMS call, rescue

call or false alarm, etc. The IC must be able to carry out emergency operations and control who and what is allowed to be at the incident so that emergency operations are not hampered. The International Fire Code (IFC) Section 104.11 grants that power to the IC. IFC Section 104.11.2 states that no person shall obstruct the actions of the IC and that directions from the IC be carried out. The legality of the IFC comes from being adopted by the State of Washington as state law and then by the City of Pullman as local law. Every three years the IFC is automatically adopted by the Pullman City Council to enforce the most current edition of the IFC.

In Pullman/WSU we (Pullman Fire Department) expect all buildings to be evacuated or in the process of being evacuated when we arrive. We have no idea if the alarm is false or not and have to assume the worst therefore evacuation of the building is expected to be underway. We respond to all fire alarms and have adopted this response because of several incidents in the past where an alarm was reported as a false alarm but in actuality the incidents were true emergencies.

[Return to the Pullman Fire home page](#)