

# BETWEEN THE CALLS



Arlington Fire Department



At Station 1 in Arlington, Tennessee, the day starts long before the calls do.

The firefighters at this station don't just show up for emergencies, they live in the space between them. Between cleaning and paperwork, training and kitchen table talk, this is a team that balances the weight of the job with the weight of ordinary life. Each member of Truck 71 arrived at the firehouse by a different path, but they've found a shared purpose here.

Lieutenant Ryan White has been with the department for over two decades, first as a volunteer and now as a leader and Lieutenant. His calm, goofy command is felt across every shift, shaped by years of service and the steady hand of someone who also does electrical work off-duty.

You can find driver Brandon Nipper nearby, moving through his checklist. A former ER worker at Le Bonheur and an aircraft rescue firefighter for FedEx, he brings precision and quiet confidence to each call. He knows what it means to adapt, to make a late-career pivot into something more than a job or uniform.

Firefighter-paramedic Tyler Starnes brings both experience and innovation. Motivated by a personal brush with tragedy, he juggles running his own ambulance company and working to change statewide EMS policy. Neil Hammonds and Preston Ausbry bring the urgency and openness of those early years on the job. Both grew up in firefighting families. Both spent time serving in other careers and are now deeply rooted in Station 1 and Truck 71's crew, making new bonds through long shifts and shared responsibilities.

The calls vary; some are medical or mechanical, and others are mundane. Some days are full of adrenaline; others stretch long and quiet, but between the high-stakes moments, life continues through conversations over coffee, goofing off while cleaning in the truck bay, and devotional scripture readings from a local pastor.

"Company Standby" becomes a way of life, not just a radio command.

The story isn't just about emergencies, it's about the humans who run toward them and everything they carry with them before, after, and in between.

Battalion Chief Jody Winfield calls Truck 71 to come survey the scene where a semi-truck ran over a stop sign and fire hydrant on Mott Street in Arlington, Tennessee. The semi-truck driver only had two weeks on the job before the incident.









An American flag hangs quietly in the interior of Truck 71, a small, simple symbol above the noise and sirens. It moves with every bump in the road, watching over the work of Arlington Fire Department Station 1 Truck 71 and Unit 71, ready to move at a moment's notice.

Firefighter Paramedic Tyler Starnes talks about his time as a firefighter paramedic as Truck 71 makes a non-emergent call to a local Arlington resident who calls Arlington Fire Department regularly.







“Company Standby,” Arlington Truck 71 and Shelby County Unit 61 dispatched to a residence in Arlington for an individual with fainting episodes and a cardiac history. Ring footage showed that the patient did not faint but had a seizure in the bed of their trunk. Shelby County Firefighter K. Hobson arrives with Unit 61 to transport the patient to the emergency room.



Truck 71 firefighters and paramedics assess a 62-year-old male inside a dimly lit bedroom. The team moves quickly around the patient as family members watch. This is where the job feels most personal, when the uniform enters the home of a relative of AFD personnel. The hospital revealed the patient had several lesions on the brain.



Firefighters Starnes and Hammonds replace the compressed water canister used at the commercial fire call. "Every detail matters when the call comes in, and being prepared is 60% of the job."



AFD driver, Brandon Nipper, drives Truck 71 through the busy afternoon traffic on Airline Road. Lights and sirens blaring through the afternoon, as Truck 71 responds to a report of a commercial fire.

The truck gets cleaned not just for looks, but for readiness. Soap and spray coat Truck 71 in a ritual as routine as it is important, as well as raising the ladder and spraying it down.







The Truck 71 crew takes a break right outside the apparatus doors, jokes flowing as freely as the afternoon air. This is the space between: work behind, work ahead, and brotherhood in the middle.

Faith Arlington's lead pastor, Brian Carlisle, leads the firefighters from Truck 71 and Engine 72 in a short devotional at Arlington Fire Station 2. Carlisle taught about the characteristics of the biblical man from Genesis 2-3. Before the day begins, the men center their faith and focus on each other.



Driver Preston Asbury and Firefighter Cornelius "Neil" Hammonds kill time between calls playing a not so quiet game of Uno No Mercy at the station's kitchen table, a brief pause amid the day's demands. The hum of the television and rustle of snack wrappers underscore the calm between calls.





Lieutenant Ryan White prepares the station's dinner as smoke curls through the air at the grill outside the station. On the menu tonight is chicken, broccoli, onions, and buns.



Lieutenant Ryan White bows his head and says a blessing over the meal and a prayer for the patient from earlier in the day, who is a relative of one of the AFD personnel. Lt. White prays for safety over his team; this moment of gratitude brings quiet reflection.



Mealtime at Arlington Fire Department is not a joke; the men cook almost every meal together on their twenty-four-hour shifts. Firefighter Paramedic Starnes prepares the crew breakfast bowls with hash-browns, onions, bell peppers, eggs, and sausages.





Battalion Chief Jody Winfield speaks while Nipper and Hammonds listen, a cutting board of cheese and crackers between them. They discuss a new storefront for the growing town of Arlington that they will be inspecting soon.



Lt. White reclines in the dim light of the dayroom, resting while Hammonds scrolls on his phone in the recliner next to him. It's a still moment in a job where stillness is never guaranteed.



Seated in the driver's seat of the rig, Brandon Nipper prepares to drive Truck 71 to the local Kroger. The job of a driver is to prepare equipment for the crew and fill out paperwork on their medical calls.









Driver Brandon Nipper and Lieutenant Ryan White walk through grocery aisles at the local Kroger. Shopping for the A-shift between calls is part of the daily routine, even in uniform.



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