



Township of Washington Volunteer Fire Department
656 Washington Avenue
Township of Washington, NJ 07676

As the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has unfolded over the last several weeks, time often feels like is slowed to a standstill. The onslaught of news headlines has made it difficult for the general public to discern how worried they should really be. People have rushed to stockpile food, toilet paper, masks, and other goods, swept up in the flurry of making sure they have enough. In the urgency of it all, we often tend to forget to thank the people at the center of it all, Our courageous first responders. These volunteers and public servants are on the front lines every day knowing that they could be affected at any time. These people have made the difficult decision to choose selflessness over self-preservation at a time when our community needs it the most. There are certain inherent risks in choosing to be a firefighter, police officer or emergency medical technician everyone will tell you that it is just part of the job. This current pandemic, however, is not what any of us could have ever imagined and now, not only is it our lives and health at risk, but also that of our families. This might be the hardest part of it all. Knowing that at any call, we might be not only exposed to this virus but that we may bring it home and sicken our wives, children, and other family members.

As a department we have been affected directly in how we operate. In an effort to keep our members safe we have adjusted our procedures in order to limit our members exposures as well as the number of firefighters entering the building we are called to. This is done both for our safety as well as the occupants of the building or residence. We have had to cancel several of our fundraising activities such as the pancake breakfast as well as social activities such as the Easter egg hunt. We will also be delaying our annual fund drive letter.

We want you to know that Washington Township Volunteer Fire Department stands at the ready to assist you as we have since 1934. Our

members remain dedicated to the job of protecting life and property within the township or wherever else we may be called. Since the beginnings of this crisis, we have responded to many calls for assistance. Notable calls were a house fire on March 12th, a mutual aid standby in Ridgewood on April 5th, and a car fire on the Garden State Parkway on April 10th. A few of our members took the Easter bunny on a tour of the Township on April 11th in the hopes of putting a smile on a few faces.

Our members have been affected directly from this pandemic. Some are now working from home, temporarily unemployed, serving as teachers for our children, healthcare providers for our families, some of us have even learned to cook. We know you have all been affected directly or indirectly as well. We want you to know that we stand together with you and together we will get through this.

As the Department Chief, I wanted to take this moment to thank each and every one of my officers and members for their selflessness and caring of their community that they would take these risks without hesitation to continue to serve our great township. I cannot begin to express how truly proud I am of this department, but I cannot say that it is unexpected. It is the nature of the fire service to come together when times are toughest, and that is exactly what our members have done once again. I would be remiss if I didn't also take a moment to also thank our colleagues in the township's Police Department, Road Department, Township Administration Employees, Our Mayor and Council and especially our Volunteer Ambulance corps as well for their service to the community. Together we will get through this #townshipstrong!

Sincerely,

Chief Kevin Zitko

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Zitko', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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