

Safety in Our Neighborhood

A Montgomery County Maryland Web Site



Firefighter Gear

For a firefighter, entering a burning building can mean walking into many hazardous conditions such as heat, flames, smoke and falling debris. Firefighting equipment and clothing continues to change as technology and experience present new and better ways to manage fires. From head to toe, the clothing that firefighters wear helps protect them from the many dangerous conditions associated with their jobs.

Firefighters did not always have the protective clothing used today. Because of this, most fires were fought from the outside of burning buildings and structures were rarely entered.

The combination of modern triple-layer turnout gear with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), PASS (personal alert safety system) devices and modern communications equipment have made it possible to enter burning buildings. Modern turnout jackets and pants are made of fire resistant fabrics such as Nomex, Aramid or Kevlar.

Bunker gear or turnout gear is the term used by many fire departments to refer to the protective clothing worn by firefighters.



The name "bunker gear" was derived from the fact that the pants and boots were traditionally kept by the firefighter's bunk at the fire station and ready for use. Firefighter gear has since moved out of the sleeping areas and into the engine room.

Fun Facts:

By the time a firefighter has all their gear on, it can add up to 60 pounds to their weight.

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Helmets

Helmets are invaluable to the firefighter. Helmets protect a firefighter's head from fire, falling debris, scalding water and extreme temperatures. Helmets have a chin strap to keep it in place, a visor on the front to protect the firefighter's eyes and flaps to protect their ears. A firefighter's helmet is very important equipment, and just like your bike helmet, should always be worn.



SCBA Face Piece

SCBA means "Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus." The SCBA supplies clean air to the firefighter so that they can breathe inside a building or an area with toxic smoke. An air tank connected to the SCBA mask supplies air and each tank provides approximately 30-45 minutes of air. However, on the scene of a fire, a firefighter will use up the supply of air much faster and may only get 10 – 15 minutes of air due to exertion. Motion alarms called PASS (personal alerting safety system) are attached to the firefighter and sounds an alarm if the firefighter stops moving for more than 30 seconds.



Gloves

Firefighters wear thick, leather gloves to protect their hands from burns, cuts and scratches. They also protect them from chemicals, glass, metal and other sharp objects. Since a great deal of firefighting or searching is done by feel, gloves are very important.



Turnout Pants

A firefighter's pants are made of different layers of fire resistant materials to provide protection from extreme heat. Turnout pants often have reinforced knees and leather cuffs. The pants, when not in use, are usually stored scrunched down around the boots for fast access when they are needed. This way, a firefighter may just step into each boot and pull the pants up quickly.



Turnout Coat

A turnout coat is the type of jacket that firefighters wear. Turnout coats can weigh as much as 20 pounds and consists of several layers of fire-resistant materials to provide protection from heat and moisture. They have reflective safety stripes to ensure that firefighters remain visible to each other and cars can see them. Wristlets, at the end of the coat sleeves, fit around the firefighters hand to prevent the sleeve from sliding up during firefighting operations.

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Boots

Because firefighters are faced with many hazards on the job – their boots are very important and must be able to handle a variety of conditions. Made of rubber or leather, the boots have steel toes to protect the firefighter's feet from falling debris, glass and metal.



Two-Way Radio

Because communication is so important during an emergency, firefighters wear two-way radios at all times so they can communicate with each other. They may be warning other firefighters of a collapsing roof or floor or alerting them to people who are trapped or need help.



Flashlight

For firefighters, every day is an emergency. Whether searching for an injured person or investigating the scene following a fire, flashlights are critical. Be sure your family has flashlights and extra batteries for power outages and other emergencies.



Hood

The hood is fire-resistant and worn over the firefighters head underneath the helmet. The hood helps protect the firefighters head, neck and ears from getting burned.



Ax

This is one of the tools that firefighters may use to gain entry into a building.



Thermal Imaging Cameras

About the same size and shape as a home video camera, these infrared cameras are used by firefighters to detect fires hidden behind walls, above ceilings, and beneath floors. Because of the camera's ability to sense surrounding objects of different temperature levels, thermal imaging cameras can find victims and firefighters through heavy smoke and darkness.



Hoses

Firefighters use fire hoses with different sized nozzles. These nozzles deliver the right amount of water to put out the fire.