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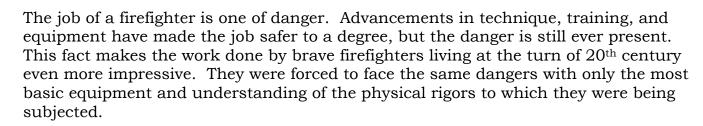
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Unsung Heroes

By Kellen West

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When we think of the equipment that our firefighters rely on we think trucks, insulated suits, and sophisticated water pumping systems. But what the New York City firefighters of the 1920s counted on most were their horses. The speed, strength, and discipline of the horse teams pulling the fire engines could mean the difference between life and death. Because of this, a fire company's horses were well cared for and their loyalty and dedication rewarded. A fire horse was a dedicated creature, and it was always a sad event in any company when a veteran steed was forced to retire. In many ways the horses that got the personnel and equipment to the fires deserved to be called heroes as well.

It wasn't just primitive equipment that firefighters of the day had to deal with; the lack of regulation in most cities' departments often meant that firefighters were overworked. The average New York City at the time would spend nine days fighting fires and then had just one day off to rest and spend time with family.