

LEVELED Book • P

My Uncle Is a Firefighter



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Written by Tillie Douglas

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My name's Tillie, and I'm about to start third grade. My uncle's a **firefighter**, and today I get to visit him at the fire station.



I shake hands with Captain Chuck Williams. He's been a firefighter for 31 years!

Uncle Jason is waiting at the door to greet me. He gives me a big hug and introduces me to the other firefighters. The fire station looks like a house, except it has shiny red fire trucks parked in the garage.

Firefighters work in **shifts**, and each shift lasts twenty-four hours. If the station doesn't get any **emergency** calls, Uncle Jason gets to sleep. During a busy shift, he might stay up all night, fighting fires and helping people.

I get a **tour** of the fire station. Just like my house, it has a kitchen, but this kitchen has three refrigerators! Each firefighting shift has a refrigerator for food. Each shift keeps their refrigerator locked so other firefighters won't eat their food. (I think that's kinda hilarious.)

There's plenty of ice cream, and black cherry is their favorite flavor.



Like a family, the firefighters shop for food and prepare dinner together. On the menu tonight is salad with chicken strips. The firefighters take turns washing dishes and making sure the station is tidy.



Right now, the firefighters are busy doing chores. They tinker with communication radios at the kitchen table to make sure they work properly. When an emergency call comes in over the radios or the station speaker, they need to hear it loud and clear.

Next stop on the tour is Uncle Jason's bedroom, which has a television, couch, and bed. After sleeping, he puts fresh sheets on the bed for the next firefighter.



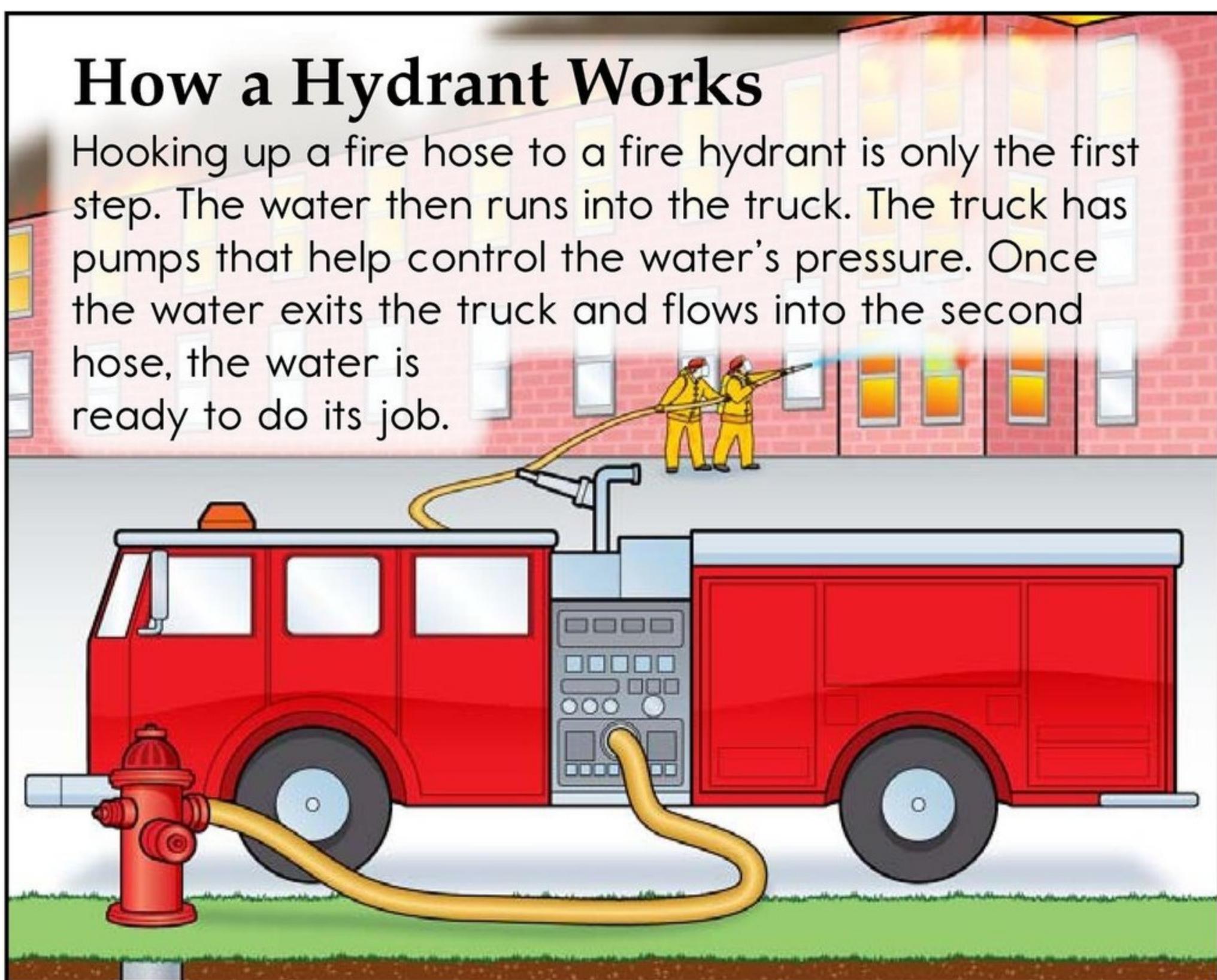


Next, Uncle Jason shows me the day room, where the firefighters hang out after chores are done. I climb into one of the big, comfy chairs and watch television with the guys. Sometimes they play video games. Most of the time, though, they're busy helping people and making sure their **equipment** is ready.

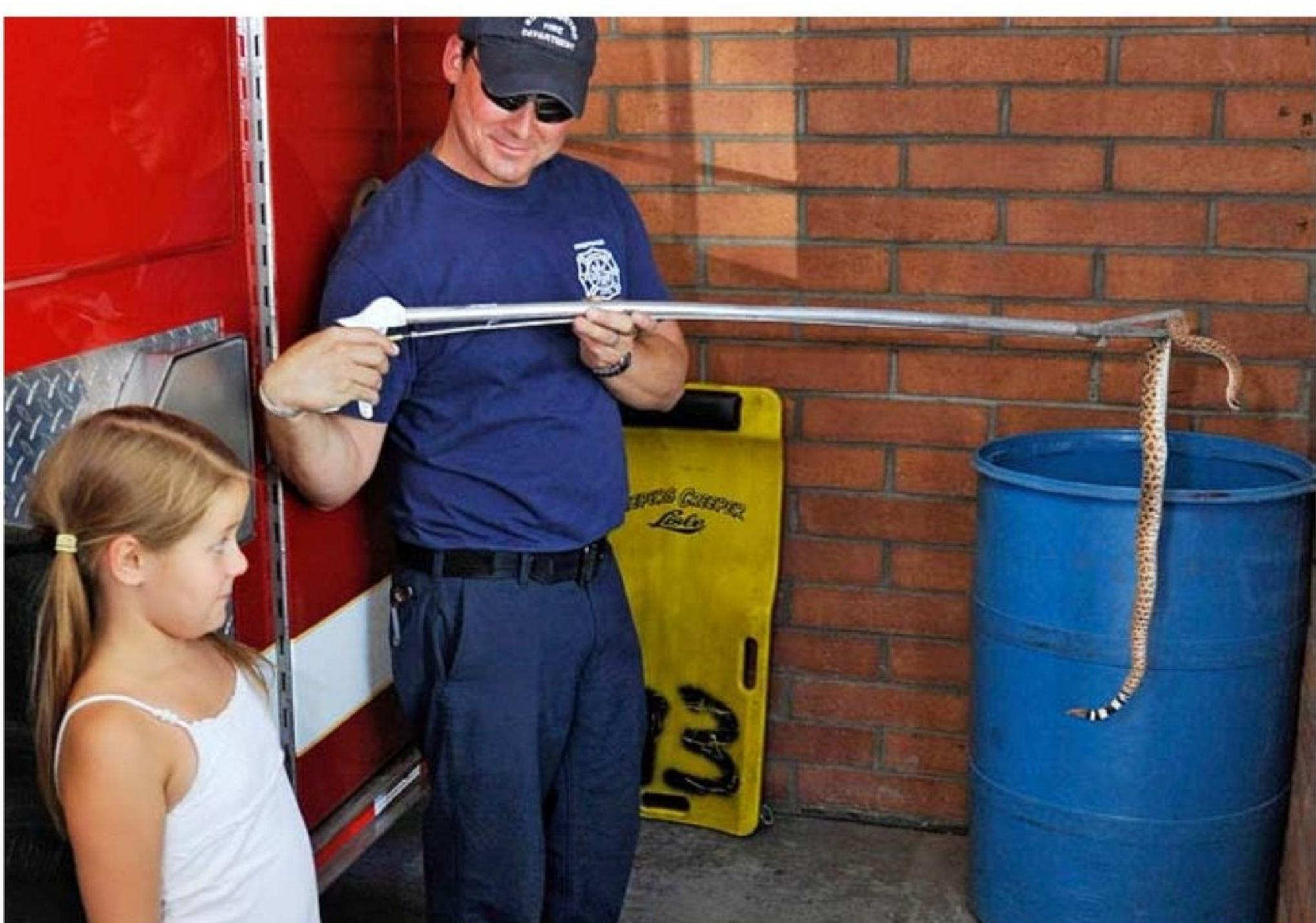
Next, we go to the most exciting part of the fire station—the garage. Two fire trucks are waiting, ready to handle any emergency. Uncle Jason usually drives the water truck, which is bright red and has a gigantic water tank. The tank holds two thousand gallons of water! Firefighters can use one thousand gallons of water in a minute. They use the water in the truck whenever no fire hydrant is nearby.

How a Hydrant Works

Hooking up a fire hose to a fire hydrant is only the first step. The water then runs into the truck. The truck has pumps that help control the water's pressure. Once the water exits the truck and flows into the second hose, the water is ready to do its job.



On the truck is the equipment that firefighters need, including medical supplies and a snake box! Since we live in the desert, the fire station gets calls from people with snakes in their yards. If the snakes are venomous, firefighters capture them with a metal pole called a snake grabber. The snakes are locked safely in the box, then let go far from any houses or businesses. Uncle Jason shows me a rattlesnake. It gives me the creeps, but it's cool, too.





The firefighters show me the gear they wear in a fire, and I get to put it on. There's a special coat, pants, a helmet, and an oxygen tank. It's like wearing a winter coat in the summer—heavy and hot!

Then, I get to sit in the fire truck! I pull on a cord, and the air horn blasts.

Fire trucks aren't the only things in the garage. There's exercise equipment, and I ask what it's for. "We like to stay fit," my uncle says. "It takes a lot of work to carry someone out of a burning house."

If there's ever a fire at home, Uncle Jason warns me never to hide under my bed or behind my curtains because that would make it hard for firefighters to find me.



Uncle Jason lets me try out the headphones.



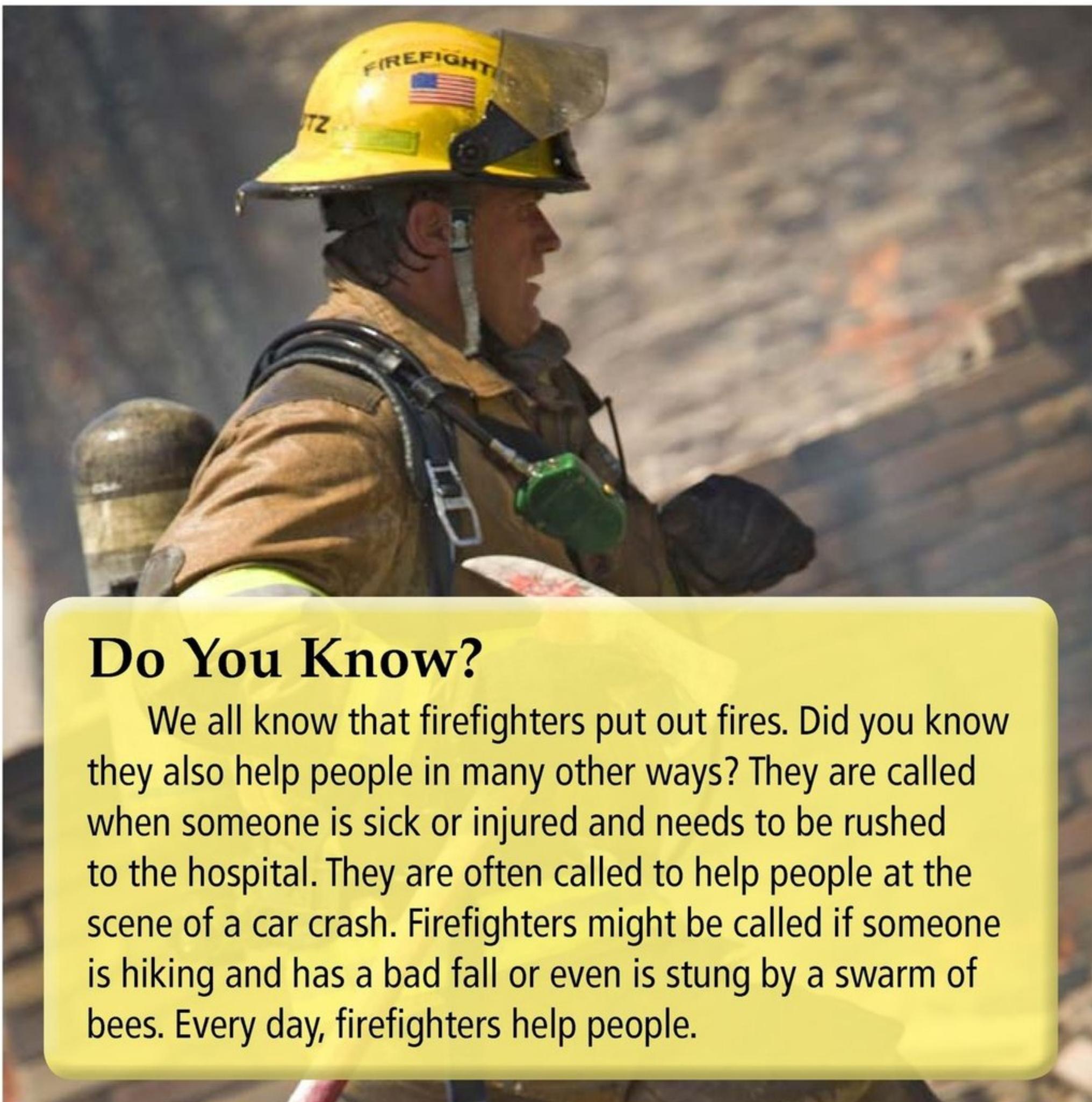
Suddenly, there's a call—it's a fire! The firefighters grab their gear and they're off, with their sirens blaring. I stay at the station with my dad while they fight the fire.

When they return, exhausted and dirty, Uncle Jason tells me all about the call. A man was working on his car in his garage when a fire started. He and his wife and daughter escaped to the sidewalk, but Fluffy, their poodle, was stuck inside.

The firefighters pulled out their hoses and went to work. Uncle Jason searched the house and found Fluffy hiding under a bed. He also found a fishbowl and two parakeets in a cage. Uncle Jason and the other firefighters saved the day! They **rescued** the pets and put out the fire. The car was destroyed, but the rest of the house was okay.

Back at the fire station, the firefighters stow away their gear. The trucks are ready for another call.





Do You Know?

We all know that firefighters put out fires. Did you know they also help people in many other ways? They are called when someone is sick or injured and needs to be rushed to the hospital. They are often called to help people at the scene of a car crash. Firefighters might be called if someone is hiking and has a bad fall or even is stung by a swarm of bees. Every day, firefighters help people.

Uncle Jason says the toughest part about being a firefighter is being away from his wife and four-year-old son. He misses them when he's working, but he loves helping people as a firefighter.

It's time for me to go home for dinner, and the firefighters start cooking their dinner, too. They're like one big family!

Glossary

emergency (*n.*) a sudden and very serious situation that requires immediate action (p. 4)

equipment (*n.*) tools used in work or play (p. 8)

firefighter (*n.*) a person whose work is putting out fires (p. 3)

rescued (*v.*) saved from danger (p. 14)

shifts (*n.*) scheduled periods of time when a person or group of people work together; the workers on a job during a period of time (p. 4)

tour (*n.*) a trip through a place to learn more about it (p. 5)

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