



# ***CHIEF'S FILE CABINET***

***Ronny J. Coleman***

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## Your Noble Neighbor

The image of the American firefighter has undergone many changes over the passage of time. Originally the firefighter was the beneficiary of Currier and Ives artistry. They were printmakers, who immortalized the era of the volunteer in the 1800's in Harper's Bazaar. Later Norman Rockwell, in his inimitable way took the public into the firehouse through his Saturday Evening Post covers. Most recently, the firefighter has been portrayed by the tragedy of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, or in some case portrayed on television and in the movies by fictionalized versions of the real thing. The range of imagery from these stories goes from glamorous, to grim, to sometimes outright goofy.

There is a real world of the fire service that's story has never been effectively told before. It is the story of your neighborhood fire house. There is probably one right down the street from your own home. It is the story of the person that may actually be one of your neighbors. That neighbor may be the one that seems to work very unusual hours. They may be the neighbor that has a decal on their vehicle in the shape of a firefighter's helmet that you have observed. You might not have actually met them, but you might have seen them around. You may have gone to one of their fundraising events, voted on a tax related issue for fire protection.

Not every firefighter is a Kirk Russell or a John Travolta. Many of them are just ordinary people who are performing an extraordinary function in society. They deliberately put themselves in harm's way to protect you. If there is a problem in your neighborhood they are there to serve – on or off-duty

This story has finally been told in a way. That accurately reflects the modern fire service. Fireman's Fund Insurance, has produced a film entitled: Into the Fire. Produced by Academy Award winner Bill Couterie, this is not a fictional version of the fire service or the Hollywood version of a specific spectacular event. It is a nose-to-nose exposure to the nature of those that follow the need to serve the public, because it is the right thing to do.

When you go to bed at night, or when you go to work in the morning, or are driving in your daily commute, it is unlikely that you are thinking about who will come to your aid if there is a fire or accident or even sudden illness, but the truth is that it will be your local fire station. It's the guys and gals that are in that local fire station. Be they full-time career firefighters or volunteers, they will be the ones that come to your aid, even risking their lives, if necessary to save yours.

Into the Fire is probably the most accurate picture that has ever been drawn of the firefighter in context of society. This movie reflects the passion, the pathos and the professionalism of those that have chosen the fire service as a way to serve society. It should be viewed by every citizen as a civics lesson in how we should never take that commitment for granted.