

NEWS RELEASE

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Thirty-six Abilene Fire Department personnel self-isolate after testing positive for COVID-19

ABILENE, Texas – The Abilene Fire Department reports thirty-six of its members have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus during the past seventy-two hours. An additional seven members of the department are in self-quarantine awaiting test results. In accordance with CDC recommendations, all personnel who have tested positive will self-isolate until cleared to return to work by the local health authority.

The City of Abilene is thankful to the AFD members who have tested positive for COVID-19 for their service to the community on the front lines. Many, if not most are experiencing mild to no symptoms, which will hopefully translate to a speedy recovery process. City and AFD administration have prioritized the health of our firefighters and their families and will continue to monitor their conditions and needs.

The Abilene Fire Department implemented its COVID-19 Response Plan in early March. This plan provided additional personal protective equipment for personnel, outlined policies for station and equipment disinfecting, and closed all stations to visitors and the general public. This plan also contains measures for dealing with multiple positive cases within the fire department while maintaining operational readiness. At this time, we are confident in our abilities to meet the needs of the public and to do so in a manner that protects both AFD members and the citizens of Abilene.

The City is in discussions with our local health authority to determine if all operational personnel need to be tested for COVID-19. At this time, firefighters are receiving tests from private providers covered by the City's health insurance plan at no cost to the firefighter. These firefighters are on the frontline of our community's COVID-19 response.

An increase in testing naturally results in increased positives. This is being seen in other parts of Texas, and our nation. It is not cause for alarm, and it does not mean our firefighters are not taking adequate precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Firefighters who test positive, or are awaiting test results will not respond to calls within the community until cleared by our local health authority.

We ask for continued prayers and support for our AFD members and their families.

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