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East End Living



ANCHORAGE MIDDLETOWN FIRE & EMS
Community Protectors Beyond the Call

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Cover Photo by Cristy Clauser Photography LLC

AN EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF LOUISVILLE'S EAST END

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ANCHORAGE MIDDLETOWN FIRE & EMS

Community Protectors Beyond the Call

BY KELLY JARBOE

PHOTOS BY CRISTY CLAUSER PHOTOGRAPHY LLC

SERVING EASTERN JEFFERSON COUNTY: MORE THAN JUST EMERGENCIES

At its core, Anchorage Middletown Fire & EMS (AMFEMS) provides fire and emergency services to the residents of eastern Jefferson County. However, these heroic emergency responders are true community protectors who also do so much more.

Chief Patrick Walsh beautifully sums up the AMFEMS family's role:

"To the residents and families we proudly serve across eastern Jefferson County: we see you - not just in emergencies, but at your schools, your parks, and your front porches. We train every day not just to respond quickly, but to respond with compassion, precision, and care. Whether it's a house fire, a medical emergency, or a simple safety check, our mission is to be there - reliably, respectfully, and ready.

"But being part of this community means more than lights and sirens. It means stopping to tie a child's shoe at a school visit, offering CPR training to your family, or handing out life jackets at the lake. We are your firefighters, your paramedics, your neighbors - and we're honored to serve you. Thank you for your continued trust and support. Stay safe, stay prepared, and know we're always here when you need us most."

NEW LEADERSHIP, CONTINUED COMMITMENT

Chief Patrick Walsh was named AMFEMS' new Fire Chief in March, succeeding Chief Kevin Groody. With nearly three decades of leadership experience, including as Fire Chief of the McMahan Fire Protection District, Chief Walsh is committed to fostering a culture of safety, innovation, and community engagement.

"The most rewarding part of the job is building trust - internally with the team, and externally with the community," says Chief Walsh. "When that trust is strong, everything else works better."



COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

AMFEMS offers a comprehensive range of services to enhance community safety through emergency preparedness and response:

- **Fire & Emergency Medical Services** - 24-hour fire suppression, advanced life support, and specialized rescue (high-rise, trench, rope).
- **Community Education & Public Safety Programs** - "Stop the Bleed" training using state-of-the-art mannequins that simulate real-life trauma scenarios to prepare for active aggressor or threat situations; a partnership with local marinas to provide free life jackets to promote water safety and reduce drowning incidents.
- **Workforce Development & Training** - advanced CPR techniques using the EleGARD device which elevates the patient's torso and head to improve blood flow and cardiac arrest survival; intensive hazardous materials and structural collapse courses.
- **Community Engagement & Support** - assistance for residents with mobility challenges; EMT services at school functions; organizing / sponsoring neighborhood activities like trick-or-treating; peer and family support services to assist personnel in managing the challenges associated with emergency services work.

A GROWING DEPARTMENT: HISTORY AND REACH

Today's AMFEMS was a long time in the making. The concept of merging the Anchorage and Middletown fire departments was first proposed in 1982. Those two districts eventually merged in 2018, and the Eastwood, Harrods Creek, and Worthington fire protection districts merged into the department in 2019. The consolidation aimed to enhance service delivery and reduce response times.

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AMFEMS currently operates 11 fire stations that serve a 95-square-mile area in eastern Jefferson County. It is the third-largest department in the Commonwealth and the second-largest with integrated EMS response.

AMFEMS' stations are strategically located across the area and include:

- Station 31 – Middletown (Headquarters)
- Station 32 – Blue Ridge Manor
- Station 33 – Forrest Springs
- Station 34 – Anchorage
- Station 35 – Eastwood
- Station 36 – Fisherville
- Station 37 – Barbourmeade
- Station 38 – Norton Commons
- Station 39 – Fincastle
- Station 40 – Prospect
- Station 41 – Windy Hills (jointly staffed with St. Matthews Fire & EMS)



A DAY IN THE LIFE: PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

Although anything but routine, a typical 24-hour shift for a firefighter or EMS provider follows a structured day of training, response, and community engagement. It begins at 7am with roll call, briefings on incidents and assignments, and apparatus checks. The morning involves station duties, physical fitness – crucial for operational readiness – and specialized training or simulation drills until noon.

The department has a diverse fleet of fire and emergency medical service vehicles, including quints (multi-purpose units combining pump, tank, aerial ladder, and ground ladders), engines (standard units with pumps and water tanks), rescue units for technical rescues and extractions, medic units (advanced life support ambulances staffed with paramedics), a hazmat unit for hazardous materials incidents, and a marine unit for water rescues.

AMFEMS operates with a combination of career firefighters and paramedics, part-time personnel, and volunteers, all committed to the highest standard of service. Full-time career staff work a 24-hour on-duty, 48-hour off-duty recurring platoon system.

The afternoons are often focused on public education and community engagement activities such as CPR training, school visits, station tours, and fire safety checks. The crew usually cooks and eats lunch and dinner together, emphasizing team bonding and building camaraderie. Personnel spend the night at the station before completing a final equipment check and helping brief the next shift at 7am the next day.



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"Stay safe, stay prepared, and know we're always here when you need us most."

Of course all of this can be, and is, interrupted with emergency responses at any time of day or night. Crews are always ready to respond at a moment's notice to diverse emergency scenarios such as fires, motor vehicle crashes, hazardous materials calls, cardiac arrests, overdoses, falls, difficulty breathing, and fire alarms. Depending on the station and what is happening in the community, calls can range from a few to more than a dozen per day.

FOSTERING CAMARADERIE AND WELL-BEING

Through it all, the crews balance the job's seriousness with camaraderie and positivity to foster mental well-being. They counteract high-stress shifts with everything from fitness to food to firehouse humor.

Fitness is essential for emergency responders, and many crews keep things fun with group workouts, fitness games, and department-wide challenges such as stair climbs, push-up contests, or wellness bingo. Cooking and eating meals together is another cherished firehouse tradition. Crew members take turns cooking



or team up together to prepare group meals, often turning it into a friendly competition or themed dinner. Different stations build camaraderie and encourage a healthy pride in their "home base" with friendly rivalries and competitions such as trivia nights and firehouse Olympic challenges.

During those rare quiet hours, crew members might play card games, watch movies, or do personal hobbies like puzzles or playing instruments. Team members are always ready to celebrate birthdays, holidays, promotions, and "first fire" calls with station shout-outs, badges, or cake.

When the pressure mounts, crew members often turn to each other. Senior members serve as mentors, passing down experience, tips, and support. AMFEMS offers a peer and family support program to assist personnel and their families in managing

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the challenges associated with emergency services work. Members are able to talk through stress or difficult calls in a supportive, stigma-free environment.

THE DRIVE TO SERVE: INSPIRATION AND BROTHERHOOD / SISTERHOOD

While each firefighter and EMS professional at AMFEMS has a personal story, common themes of inspiration and fulfillment emerge from their words and actions. Many firefighters and paramedics are motivated by being a lifeline on someone's worst day, valuing the direct connection with those they serve and helping both in crisis and through preventative measures like CPR training or smoke alarms.

A significant number of personnel are second or third-generation firefighters and cite the legacy and tradition of the family who served before them as their inspiration. Still others thrive on the variety. No two days at the station are alike - some are filled with high-stakes rescues, while others are focused on public education, mentoring, or mechanical problem-solving.



Chief Walsh enjoys mentoring others and watching them grow into confident, capable leaders. He is especially proud when firefighters and medics take initiative, support each other, and stay mission-focused, even under pressure. His drive comes from a belief that leadership is about service, not authority.

No matter what the inspiration, the crews recognize there is a unique brotherhood / sisterhood in the fire station. Crews build unique bonds by training, working, and often living together as a team. They become a family that is built on loyalty, trust, shared risk, and mutual support.

JOIN THE TEAM

AMFEMS is always recruiting and welcomes those interested in becoming a firefighter or EMT to explore career and volunteer opportunities. The department offers hands-on experience, training, and mentorship for those looking to serve their community and grow in emergency services.

For additional information, visit www.amfems.org

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September 17, 2025

Join us for Clay Breakers, a new sporting clay competition at The Sporting Club at The Farm in New Albany. This exciting event promises a day of fun, competition, and camaraderie. Whether you're a seasoned pro or an amateur, come out and support Portland Christian School! Visit onecau.se/clay-breakers or scan the QR code to register today.

FALL FESTIVAL

October 18, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The annual Portland Christian School Fall Festival is BACK! Come enjoy live music featuring Kentucky's own JD Shelburne, artisan vendors, delicious food, and activities for the whole family. It's the perfect way to kick off the new school year! Visit onecau.se/2025pcsfallfestival or scan the QR code to join us as a sponsor or register as a vendor.

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