



Media Release

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Igniting possibilities: Female students introduced to firefighting as a career option

Finding a future in fire services was the focus at Fire Station 1 on Wednesday, as a group of female students from School District 22 (Vernon) got a firsthand look at what it's like to work as a firefighter.

The hands-on training was led by long-time Vernon Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) member, Lieutenant Allyson Reich, who touched on all aspects of the firefighting profession.

"We want these students to think outside the box where a profession is concerned, or to gain the confidence to pursue something they are truly passionate about," said Lt. Reich. "The purpose of this day is to demonstrate to the students that firefighting is a viable profession for females."

During the day-long event, the students heard from guest speaker Deputy Fire Chief Sandra Follack of Kelowna Fire Rescue about what it takes to get into fire school and how one would obtain the pre-employment qualifications to be hired after fire school.

The students learned about specific elements of the job, such as first medical response, HAZMAT, auto extrication, confined space, over-the-bank rope rescue, structural firefighting, urban interface forest firefighting, public education, fire inspection, and fire investigation.

Students also spent time performing firefighting tasks, such as donning/doffing Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), putting on turnout gear, experiencing an elevated waterway in the aerial ladder, and an auto extrication experience.

"Today was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said student Ivy Jensen. "I am hoping to be a firefighter when I am older, and today, I was able to prove to myself that I can be a firefighter, and that I can do the job. Today's training is exactly what I wanted. I am now even more eager get started."

The students were selected for the day of training after expressing interest in a career in fire services through a written essay.

“We are so grateful to Lt. Reich and Vernon Fire Rescue Services for providing this opportunity to our students in SD22,” said Corinne McWhinney, Principal of Career Programs, vLern, & Academies. “Currently, female firefighters are underrepresented in Canada, and this provides the opportunity for our female youth to see themselves in this career. The Female Firefighter for a Day program provides a hands-on experience and leaves students feeling proud and inspired through the challenges they face.”

This is the second year VFRS has hosted the Female Firefighter for a Day training event. Lt. Reich is an 18-year veteran of VFRS and Vernon's first female professional firefighter.

“I like to say to the students that ‘you can be, what you can see,’ and I am living proof that a career in firefighting is a reality for women.”



Photo above: Female students from SD22 pose with Lt. Allyson Reich during a day of training with Vernon Fire Rescue Services.