

## 1<sup>st</sup> Responders

I moved to The Woodlands in December, 2008 from Houston. In Houston, I belonged to a photo club which was very similar to WPC. The Houston club, while having many similarities e.g. monthly meetings, field trips, educational workshops, etc., completed a unique project that evolved into a joint endeavor between the Houston Fire Department and the club. The club members were assigned, primarily on weekends, to ride with District Fire Chiefs and EMS Supervisors and take photographs of the scenes to which they were responding. This project spanned a period of six months. At the conclusion of making pictures, the club framed approximately 100 photographs and along with a slideshow presentation, held a show commemorating the anniversary of the 911 tragedy and honoring HFD. The show was held in One Allen Center and was attended by the Command Staff of HFD as well as firefighters, City of Houston dignitaries and the media.

The show was very successful for both the City and the club. Many of the images have been used by the city for publications, etc. The slideshow is used for recruitment purposes. The exhibit of framed photographs were used in auctions benefiting HFD charities (one of which sold for \$5,000) and was later moved to various hospitals in the city (including the Memorial Hermann Burn Center). The photographs, images and prints were given to HFD to use as they deemed appropriate. The members were free to use their images in a non commercial way in their portfolios. I have shown the club the slideshow of the project, but if you have missed it, go to the link below and click on the link (the first time you will be prompted to load a small plug-in for your browser) <http://www.photodex.com/sharing/viewshow.html?fl=2903864&alb=0>

One of my first thoughts when moving to The Woodlands was how to recreate this project. It was so beneficial to the Houston club, as well me personally, I set out to duplicate the process in my new home. I soon realized that it would be more difficult to accomplish here since there are many different agencies covering the one HFD; three major fire departments and one EMS service. I have contacted all, but at this time, Montgomery County Hospital District is the only one who has given us a go.

I had the first organizational meeting with MCHD last week and the following are some of the guidelines necessary for us to proceed with the project:

- 1- All images would have to be submitted to MCHD prior to being shown to anyone. We will set up some type of system to handle this requirement.
- 2- A mandatory meeting will be held between an official of MCHD and all photographers who wish to participate. This will probably require the signing of a liability and HIPPA waiver. Other procedures of do's and don'ts will be outlined at this meeting. It will most likely be held in the next two weeks and would be at their offices (near the Conroe Hospital on Loop 336) in the late afternoon.
- 3- Each participant will need to send a small headshot image so that ID badges can be made. You can begin sending these now to my email address below.

- 4- The initial period for the project will be July to December. It may be shorter if they have enough images or longer if they don't.
- 5- There will be many opportunities for members to ride with EMS Supervisory personnel. Each day there are 4 Supervisors and 3 shifts. These rides will have to be scheduled in advance and more information will be provided on when and how this will be accomplished. There will not always be space to take photographers on a given shift. A map will be provided of the location of where Supervisors will be dispatched. Once you are riding, you will have to remain with them until they return to their base. This timing will depend on the activity of that day.

As was the case with the Houston project, many details and procedures evolved rather than were set out in the beginning. I imagine this endeavor will follow the same course, so don't assume this to be the final and complete guidelines.

I will continue to pursue the various area fire departments and, if successful, more photographers will be required.

If you have not participated in photojournalism, this is an outstanding and exciting opportunity to do so. It is a way for the club to give back to its community and at the same time recruit new members. There will be some type of concluding event to showcase the pictures and tell the story of the heroes no one ever thinks about, but always assumes will be there in the case of emergencies.

Want to sign up? Email me your name, telephone number and email address.

Thanks,  
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