Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fire station renovations bring comfort and joy to Fort Drum firefighters this holiday

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Dec. 9, 2020) -- Fort Drum firefighters are receiving a belated gift this holiday season, and it’s something they are all going to appreciate heading into the New Year.

Interior renovations to Fire Stations #1 and #3 have been ongoing since August with an expected completion date of Dec. 31.

The work on Fort Drum Fire Station #1, which was originally built in 1988, includes new bathroom, kitchen and living quarters for the firefighters. Additionally, flooring, ceiling tiles and light fixtures are being replaced.

“I have been here for 23 years, and I’ve never seen a renovation to this building like we presently have,” said Fort Drum Fire Chief Jason Brunet. “This was much-needed.”

Mike Thomas, Fort Drum Directorate of Emergency Services deputy director, said that Fire Station #1 is considered the workhorse of the department due to its location in the garrison footprint.

“They get the majority of the calls from our Soldiers and family members, and so maintaining the facility is very important to us,” he said. “This is part of our continuing efforts to improve our capabilities and our infrastructure.”

Brunet said that Fire Station #3 was undergoing similar renovations in addition to receiving a new boiler.

“Both fire stations have the same completion date, and they are expected to be finished on time,” he said. “I couldn’t be happier with how this has progressed, and that is due to how well we’ve been able to work with the Fort Drum Public Works team and the contractors.”

The firefighters said that the added comfort and conveniences make a world of difference to them.

“At a minimum, there are going to be four firefighters at Fire Station #1 at any given time, maybe six,” Brunet said. “We only had one shower for them. That’s something we were able to fix for them. Basically, this was about making life more functional.”

To that end, many of them contributed ideas to improve the conditions inside the fire stations. Brunet said their input ranged from the color of the kitchen cabinet tops and base moldings to the additions of a pull-out trash bin and spice rack.

“Everybody had gotten together to talk about the things they wanted to see, and it was really a joint effort between the officers and firefighters to make this our home,” said Firefighter Garrett Burback. “People say this is our second home, but honestly, I probably spend more time here than I do at my actual home.”

While the square footage hasn’t changed, Burback said that the renovation is making better use of the space.

“Instead of everything looking so small and compartmentalized, we wanted things to seem more open and spacious,” he said. “Everybody is really happy with how this is going to look when it’s finished. It has a homier environment than before.”

Burback has served with Fort Drum Fire for 17 years, and he said that there were never any complaints about the fire station – just wishful thinking.

“Everybody understands that money is not always there for something like this, so we were all kind of just waiting for this day,” he said. “We knew it would happen eventually, but there were no complaints. I’ve been to other fire departments, so I know that we’ve had it good here.”

At Fire Station #3, Firefighter Kenneth Stout said that the new kitchen layout was designed for efficiency and ease-of-use.

“Basically what we had before was just a shelf with everything crammed inside,” he said. “If you were looking for steak seasoning, you could spend minutes digging around for it. With the new layout, daily life is going to be a lot easier in here.”

Stout, a former 2nd Brigade Combat Team Soldier, has served with Fort Drum Fire for eight years.

“A lot of people would think this isn’t much, but when you’re here 48 hours at a time, even having a fresh coat of paint on the wall makes a difference,” he said.

As quality-of-life projects go, Brunet said that this one is much-deserved and much-needed for his department.

“When you look at the schedule for firefighters, these guys are living here two days straight before they even see their own homes,” he said. “So it’s important to us that we can make this – their home away from home – as comfortable as we can.”

At the end of the day, Brunet said that these renovations are also about departmental readiness.

“Our firefighters have to be ready to respond whenever that alarm goes off. Any improvements we can make that will positively affect their ability to perform – whether it’s an additional bathroom or a new stove – then that’s what we’re going to do.”

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Caption #1: Fort Drum firefighters are receiving a belated gift this holiday season when interior renovations to Fire Station #1 and #3 are set for completion by the end of December. Improvements are being made to bathrooms, kitchens and living quarters, as well as the replacement of flooring, ceiling tiles and light fixtures. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Caption #2: Fort Drum Directorate of Emergency Services officials review the progress made during the renovation of Fire Station No. 1 on post Dec. 1. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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