

Getting to Know Katy

Katy Fire
Department
hires a
four-legged
firefighter

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Katy is a rescue
Dalmatian and a
full-time employee
at the Katy Fire
Department



Katy Fire Department works 24 hours on three shifts with Katy being assigned two handlers per shift to ensure consistency

When Lt. Shane Hughes of the Katy Fire Department (KFD) first thought about adding a four-legged team member to their department, a Dalmatian was a natural choice. “Like any family thinking of getting a dog, we had to carefully consider everything that goes along with pet ownership: costs, vet care, who would walk her, etc.,” says Laurie Conrad, firefighter and president of the Katy Fire and EMS Association. “Everyone in the department had to agree before we would proceed.”

Rescuing Katy

After considering their options, KFD decided they preferred giving a rescue dog a good home. Beth White of Dalmatian Rescue of Colorado put them in touch with Jeanne, a woman who was fostering a Dalmatian in League City. Lt. Hughes met with Jeanne and the foster dog to evaluate her demeanor and evaluate whether or not she would make a good fit.

“A few days later, Jeanne brought her to the station for a site visit,” Conrad recalls. “We fell in love with her immediately, and I believe the feeling was mutual.” They appropriately named their new team member, Katy. She was reportedly rescued from an animal hoarder and had only been in foster care a few days before coming to live at KFD. “She was very thin, but otherwise in good health,” says Conrad. “We knew when we rescued a dog that we would have to give her plenty of time and space to settle in.”

Other than being a little protective of her toys at first, Katy adjusted very quickly. “It almost seemed like she had never had her own toys and wanted to protect them. When we gave them to her, she ran and hid them in her kennel,” says Conrad. With the safety and security of constant love and attention, Katy now feels right at home - and her toys can be found all over the station.

Training as a Firedog

Katy is an official City of Katy employee, has a photo ID just like the rest of her team members, and her training number is D01. Although she has not been to a working fire yet, she

has been on the fire truck during her training exercises and has done very well. “She will eventually be responding to all calls. She loves to be on-the-go and anywhere we are,” adds Conrad.

Katy lives at the fire station, and although she has her own space, has been known to sneak into a few dorm rooms. During shift changes, she makes the rounds, greeting each member of the on-coming shift and saying goodbye to the off-going shift. “She seems to have an awareness that we come and go and which people belong together,” Conrad laughs.

Mac Macintosh, a trainer with 48 years of experience who has also worked with Katy Police Department canines, has donated his time and service to work with Katy and her handlers. He notes that Katy is very intelligent, a quick learner, and eager to please.

Spotting Katy

Katy’s primary role will be in public relations. She will be a key component at events and station tours, and will ultimately demonstrate fire safety techniques such as, “stop, drop, and roll.” “We hope that she will make a great impression on kids,” Conrad adds. Katy will be making several public appearances in the community, especially at schools, and KFD is excited to be able to utilize her in this capacity. “She is energetic but very even-tempered, perfectly suited for interacting with the public,” says Conrad.

If you take a tour of the station, you’re sure to spot Katy greeting guests or chasing her favorite toy, a stuffed green avocado, and generally loving her new home. “KFD is truly like a family and Katy completes our family,” says Conrad. “She is our companion, but she also has a job to do. We love our jobs, and we think Katy does, too.” KM



KIRSTEN CORNELL is the lead associate editor at Katy Magazine. She is the daughter of a firefighter, but they regrettably did not have a Dalmatian.