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Fire Department: 972-625-3944

TCFD boasts Texas’ only certified Georgia Smoke Divers

THE COLONY, Texas — *“If I persist, if I continue to try, if I continue to charge forward, I will succeed.”*

That is the opening line of the Smoke Diver’s creed, a lengthy pledge participants in the [Georgia Smoke Diver](#) program must memorize and recite at the start of each day. The program is one of the nation’s most advanced firefighter training courses. It tests the limits of firefighters’ physical and mental stamina by requiring them to perform under the most extreme conditions.

Only about half of those enrolled will graduate. The Colony Fire Department, however, exceeded the average after two of its members –Trent Caldwell and Jeff Luse – completed the course earlier this year, becoming the only firefighters in Texas who can say that. TCFD’s Justyn Fraize also enrolled but was disqualified due to an injury.

Fraize, Caldwell, and Luse travelled to Georgia the first week of March for a six-day course that included between 12 and 15 hours of drills each day. According to the program’s website, the drills are designed to condense and replicate the extreme demands that may be placed on firefighters at any incident. Special emphasis is placed on the challenges firefighters face at structure fires, multiple-alarm fires and multiple fires within a single shift.

Luse said he and the others prepared as best they could. In the three months leading up to the trip, Luse went twice a day to a kettlebell gym similar to Crossfit where he would exercise in his turnout gear. He also followed a strict diet and got his body fat down to 4.7 percent.

“Needless to say, I was in the best shape of my life,” Luse said. “It’s easy to workout with gym clothes on but when you add 60 pounds of gear and then restrict your breathing with a mask, it takes it to a whole other level.”



After all that, Luse was prepared physically but was still not psychologically ready for the class.

“The mental stress that they put you through is pretty rough but that is the core of the program,” he said. “They tire you physically so that you make mental mistakes.”

The program is so tough it has been compared less to standard military training and more to paramilitary training. Participants must eat 5,000 calories a day to replace what they burn during the drills, Luse said.

Only about 1 percent of the national firefighting population are certified Smoke Divers. Beyond what benefits may arise when applying those skills in real-life situations, bragging rights are the main reward.



“I know there are a lot of other fireman that could complete the course but it still feels great. I feel very accomplished,” Luse said. “The class gave me a lot more confidence in my skills and my abilities to handle stressful situations.”

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