

Volunteer Firefighter Saves Man's Life

Submitted By Oak Bowery Fire Department



Michael Chupp's life was saved by the quick thinking and action of Jeremy Robinson on December 29, 2020. Robinson, who owns and operates Robinson Equipment Service, also volunteers as the Fire Chief of Oak Bowery Fire and Rescue near Lafayette. He was repairing equipment on Chupp's logging job in Clay County when a log penetrated the cab of the loader that Chupp was operating. It ripped and partially severed part of Chupp's arm, trapping him inside the loader with severe bleeding from a ruptured artery.

Robinson saw the accident, recognized the urgency of the situation, and took immediate action. He removed his belt and used it as a tourniquet to stop the loss of blood, called 911, requested a helicopter air lift, and used the GPS coordinates on his cell phone to direct the ambulance to the logging site. The ambulance crew

stabilized Chupp and transported him to a landing zone where a helicopter with medical personnel arrived approximately 20 minutes later. They airlifted him to UAB hospital in Birmingham where the hospital's trauma team took over. Following surgery on his arm, Michael spent several days at UAB, returned home, and is now back at work doing light duty.

On December 30, the day after the accident, Tina, Michael's wife, posted her appreciation and thoughts about the accident on Facebook: "As some have heard Michael had an accident at work yesterday. To say that our God is faithful is an understatement! Of all the days for this to happen, Jeremy, a young man that works on their equipment, just happened to be there. He is Chief of the Oak Bowery Fire Department and paramedic too, and when that treetop went through that loader cab and almost took Michael's arm off, he was there and knew exactly what to do. So here he is sitting up finally eating and what they thought would take three surgeries turned into one. We just want to thank each and every person that has prayed, called, or texted and thought about us in this scary time. To Jeremy and Clay County ambulance and rescue squad and to the flight nurse and pilots that got him to the hospital in time and the doctors, nurses and anyone that had anything to do with getting my honey where he is right now, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. He will be on the mend for a few weeks and we would appreciate your continued prayers. We love you all!" – Michael Chupp and Tina Ayers Chupp

When Jeremy Robinson was asked how he knew what actions were needed to save Michael's life, he answered that his training as a volunteer firefighter was helpful. As Fire Chief at Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue, Robinson has received training in all phases of firefighting, accident response, and natural disaster response, such as the 2019 tornado near Beauregard and Smiths Station. He led Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue's work in that event. Other volunteer first responders who know and work with Robinson at Oak Bowery describe him as an outstanding leader and hard worker who remains calm under pressure and handles difficult situations correctly. Those qualities saved Michael Chupp's life on December 29, 2020.

In talking with Robinson, he strongly emphasized the need for more people to be involved in all volunteer fire departments in our area. He added this about volunteer first responders everywhere . . . "We are all volunteers who serve without pay to provide some level of fire protection and response to emergencies in the rural areas where we live. We need more help."

Robinson attributes the actions that saved Chupp's life to the free training and experience he received over the years as a volunteer firefighter and the quick teamwork of all the first responders involved in the effort. His training has included first aid, navigation, and extrication of personnel from wrecks. He says

Alabama's Rural Communities Continue to Experience Critical Shortage in Volunteer Firefighters

By Coleen Vansant
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In 2020, I wrote a series of three articles regarding the critical shortage of volunteer firefighters and medical personnel in rural areas of our state. The adjacent story regarding the heroic and life-saving efforts of Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue Chief Jeremy Robinson on an equipment accident he happened upon in Clay County demonstrates the critical need for adequately trained and staffed rural fire departments in Alabama.

This story provides a sterling example of the value of trained rural firefighters and medical personnel in rural areas of our state. For more than 85 percent of Alabamians, local volunteer firemen are the first lifeline for emergency care. They are the lifeblood in communities where paramedics and emergency rooms are many minutes, sometimes even hours away. Rural firefighters and medical personnel are vital to the health and well-being of residents on a day-to-day basis, as well as in catastrophic conditions where they are the first to respond.

Having well-equipped, staffed, and trained rural fire departments for most of the state is the first link in the chain of community safety for the majority of Alabama residents. 🇺🇸



that many of the logging sites that his company regularly visits are hard to find and on rainy days even harder to get to. Loggers need to be able to communicate their location to 911 dispatch using landmarks or GPS

coordinates in situations where they do not have a physical address. One easy method is sharing their location with a pin drop from the maps on their phone. Emergency crews need to have access to four-wheel drive when responding to a logging accident. Robinson was able to keep calm, contact 911, and provide first aid because of his volunteer training and recommends it for everyone. 🇺🇸



Jeremy Robinson
Fire Chief of Oak Bowery Fire & Rescue