



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services Acquired Structure Training Program

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) actively seeks out buildings to use for training. These buildings are referred to as acquired structures (AS). Acquired Structure Training (AST) provides valuable hands-on training for MCFRS personnel that cannot be duplicated with the structures located on our fixed facility at the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA). Therefore, your willingness and generosity to donate your property to the AST program is a tremendous value to both MCFRS personnel and the community we serve.

The type of training we conduct varies based on the building type, construction, and the project timeline. We accept all types of building, with a few stipulations. Although AS buildings are going to be torn down, we will reject buildings (regardless of non-destructive or destructive training) that are structurally unsound to the point of being hazardous, infested with rodents, other sanitary risks that would put our personnel at risk for harm, or any other situation that would deem the building unsafe for our personnel, as we operate under the premise that the building is more than reasonably safe. The MCFRS AST program's number one goal is to provide quality, realistic training that has addressed important Risk Management principles that adhere to the highest level of safety possible, for both the property owner and our personnel.

MCFRS has two training options: Non-destructive and destructive. Our training is adaptable and scalable to fit the building, from simple non-destructive to destructive training that may include more complex training such as Technical Rescue Team (TRT) training. Being adaptable and scaling our training to fit the structures and training needs allows us to be flexible with the timeline of the project. It is our mission to not only keep the process simple and easy, but to also make sure that those who wish to donate a building feel assured that the process protects all parties involved.

Non-destructive training allows for basic skills that will not damage the property, these may include advancing a dry hose line, search techniques, ladder placement, apparatus positioning, building rope systems, etc. Destructive training allows our personnel to realistically practice skills such as: fire attack methods (hose stretches and fire attack techniques using water), ventilation methods (cutting holes in the roof), forcible entry (forcibly opening doors, cutting security bars off windows, etc.), search and rescue, ladder throws, firefighter survival techniques, etc. AST affords MCFRS personnel the opportunity to train in an environment that is more than reasonably safe yet still providing a way to sharpen skills by practicing them in different types of structures.

Sometimes a tax deduction may be received based on the donation of the structure to the Fire Department. An accountant or tax attorney should be consulted regarding this issue prior to making the donation if a tax deduction is being sought. MCFRS cannot provide information in this regard.

As the AST program manager, I am always happy to answer any questions and help get the process started. For your convenience, we created a flow chart as a separate document that outlines how our donation process works.

Requirements for donation to the MCFRS are as follows:

- A demolition permit must be issued. (Our destructive training is considered demolition)
- All utilities must be disconnected.
- An asbestos survey is required. (Required for demolition permit)
- Proof of ownership and the discontinuance of damage insurance are required.
- Letters are exchanged authorizing fire department use of the building, and our responsibilities to the property owner.
- If seeking a tax deduction, an appraisal per IRS form 8283, must be conducted prior to the MCFRS performing drills.

Ideally, we would like to have a four-week window to ensure that we have enough time to complete the required paperwork so that we still have ample time to train. However, depending on the time it takes to complete all the paperwork some sites may have a longer training cycle than others. Therefore, we like to approach each site on a scalable level. For example, a non-destructive training requires less paperwork and allows our personnel to start training sooner than later. After a demolition permit and its associated paperwork (i.e., asbestos free certification/abatement) are received we can transition to destructive training with ease, providing every opportunity for a rich, rewarding, and safe training experience for our MCFRS personnel.

While we have a fixed training facility at the PSTA, acquired structures provide a level of realism in training that cannot be replicated in a fixed facility (i.e., the same buildings limit training scenarios and do not provide a realistic experience). These structures are an incredible learning platform that allows our training to be adaptable and scalable to meet our training needs.

If you have any questions, or are interested in donating a structure, please contact the MCFRS In-Service Training Coordinator, Captain Shelley Wheeler at (773) 240-8213 or email me at shelley.wheeler@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Thank you.