The sirens can roar at any time, and the trucks go out in any weather.

We have known that about our volunteer firefighters for a long time. That’s part of the job. That’s what they do.

But it took the coldest part of January to point out what that means.

The sirens roared often recently when the temperature plunged below zero and stayed in the frigid zone around the clock for several days. Within minutes of each siren call, the trucks were rolling, and firefighters were scrambling to answer immediately.

It didn’t matter if was in the middle of the night, and they were warm and snug in bed, maybe dreaming of the trout opener this spring. Didn’t matter if the Green Bay Packers were facing a critical situation late in a playoff game. Didn’t matter if their favorite supper was on the table.

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It didn’t matter if it was really, really cold. One of those calls came on that night recently when temperatures plunged close to 30 below. Didn’t matter. Neither did the snow and ice on the roads or the wind that picked up the snow and freezing spray and threw it in their faces.

Fighting fires is physically demanding work, and you usually get wet. When it’s really cold in winter, the spray that falls on you turns to ice crystals on your helmet and jacket. It freezes your face. That didn’t matter, either.

Neither did the fact that they do this as volunteers, standing up for their neighbors. They get paid per call. Sometimes, they answer plenty of calls in a short time, like when it’s grass fire season in spring. Other times, the work gets slow, and they have to wait for a long time.

But whenever the call comes, they are ready. They go out and do what they have to do, for the protection of our county, our businesses, our homes and you and me.

That’s what they do, these volunteer firefighters of Iron County. And it doesn’t matter if we say thank you, because they will keep on doing it. It runs in their blood.

But thank you, all the same.

--Peter Nocerini