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# COMMONWEALTH

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. - January 2024

## Chief

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Sneak  
Preview

## 2024 VIRGINIA FIRE AND RESCUE CONFERENCE

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**Allen Baldwin**  
2023 VFCA President  
York County Fire and Life Safety

From my family to yours, I hope your holidays have been merry and bright, filled with family, friends, great memories, giving thanks and traditions old and new. Family is everything and as most know, I stand by this belief. Don't lose sight of this ever, times change, the family grows and traditions get carried on. While I would have liked to have spent Thanksgiving with my grandchildren, there was a certain amount of pride that they would be eating dinner with their father at his firehouse with the fire house families and he was leading the effort and acting as head chef. It doesn't seem that long ago that he was sitting at the station table while I was frying a turkey out on the ramp. Whether you're a Chief Officer, Company Officer, the Senior Man or Firefighter, always remember the importance of family the one at home and the one at the station we need to take care of both because without them we are lost.

This will be my last message as President to you. It has been my honor and privilege to serve the Association and its members and continue the tradition of the association being the premier fire and emergency services organization in the commonwealth. I could have never imagined the journey that I would be taking when I answered a phone call from Chief Eudailey and Chief Cover several years ago asking me if I was interested in becoming involved in the VFCA and how that journey would take me here. It has been an interesting, enriching, and humbling journey and I hope to continue the journey in the years to come in various capacities.

So to the association board and members, I want to say thank you for a very successful year. Special thanks to my wife Julie and my family, Chief Kopczynski, Tracey Payne and the members of the York County Department of Fire and Life Safety, Vice Presidents Chief Vance Cooper and Kevin Good along with the VFCA Staff and board without their support we couldn't have carried on the associations great traditions, efforts and the challenges that we met head on.

I said in the October edition of the Commonwealth Chief that we are an Association on the move at a breakneck pace. That is far from the truth, we are an Association that is leading the other emergency services organizations in the Commonwealth setting the pace for others to follow while forging forward with vision, commitment and dedication.

The bell has rung, the rigs are running, the crew is geared up and getting on the rig, so sit down, buckle up and

let's get out on the street and go to work. The officers and members have been out on the street literally daily since we last spoke championing the causes of the Commonwealth's Emergency Services. So where have we been and where are we going.

The Association Officers and related stakeholders met at the Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg Virginia on October 12th and 13th. The board discussed various association related business and conducted a strategic planning session focusing on our main goals for the 2024 and the next several years. From a legislative perspective the Associations will be focusing on the implementation of HB 2175's recommendations, Cancer Presumption and Testing, and Town Home Sprinkler Requirements. From a general association perspective we will be focusing on Membership Engagement, Stakeholder Engagement, Support for Legislative Initiatives, VFCA Board Activity and Participation and Training and Education.

Speaking of House Bill 2175 Funding Study the report was submitted to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the Governor's Office prior to the October 1 deadline. The report was returned to the Secretary's Office for review. The review has been completed and the Secretary's Office has forwarded the report to the legislature to be posted. The report content remained as submitted by the work group, but the report introduction by the Secretary's Office leaves some questions on the reports validity. You can find a copy of the final report on our website. Even after the report's release, the Association remains committed and are leading efforts to educate the legislature on the importance of this legislation to ensure quality emergency services in the commonwealth. The Board is currently working with the Virginia Professional Firefighters and other stakeholders to put together a lobby day in Richmond on January 18th, 2024. Vice President Cooper is working with a group to develop educational materials that we can put in your hands to help educate your legislatures on the local level which is vital to our success. On a side note the Virginia Fire Services Council Legislative Book has been published and is available on the association's website also. All stakeholders in attendance at the related meetings agreed the three main priorities are HB 2175 Funding, Cancer Presumption and Town Home Sprinklers. The fact that all involved organizations are in agreement is a major accomplishment, especially with the VFCA being the lead.

With the majority of the Commonwealths Emergency Medical Services being Fire Service based the Association and its officers continue to be involved with helping to rectify the Office of EMS Funding issues. I was able to speak with the acting OEMS Director Cam Crittenden and Dr. Shelton the VDH Secretary in reference to our concerns that funding needed to be restored to the EMS Councils as the situation was becoming more critical every day. I also pledged the Association's support to help make this happen. The association insisted on having a seat on the OEMS reorganization work group, Assistant Chief Brian Frankel from Stafford County will be representing us. The association also insisted on improved communications on OEMS funding and operations during this time. We will continue to meet with those involved to try to stay in front. As part of our support we have been working diligently with OEMS to add an extensive EMS track to the Fire and Rescue Conference to fill the gap of this year's EMS Symposium being canceled. We have also extended an invitation to join the 2025 Conference since the 2024 EMS Symposium has also been canceled.

I had the Opportunity to represent the Association, and Commonwealth along with IAFC President and Fairfax County Fire Chief John Butler, and Robbie Dawson NFPA Eastern Regional Manager at the National Fire Protection Association Fire Chiefs Summit at NFPA Headquarters on November 13 and 14. A lot of great information will be shared in an upcoming issue.

After years of hard work, the Association will be rolling out its new web site and online membership program. Thanks to all that made this happen, especially Lori Skytta.

Board members continue to meet with various stakeholder organizations to improve communications and relationships particularly focusing on the funding study and cancer prevention/presumption. It is important that we maintain these relationships moving forward, if you can assist please reach out.

Our fall regional Shakers Forum was held at the Warren County Public Safety Center with about 30 in attendance. Thanks to Chief Bonzano, Assistant Chief Maiatico and Warren County for hosting and supporting the event. Planning is in process for a March Regional Shakers in the Roanoke area.

The committees and sections have been hard at work. The Administrative Professionals Section held their annual retreat in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The Federal/Military Section held its Summit in Williamsburg on October 16th, and the Company Officers held their Summit in Chesterfield Virginia on November 16 and 17th. A Virginia Fire Officer Academy On the Road was held at Smith Mountain Lake this fall also. The retirees group is getting quite organized thanks to the efforts of several members and we will be increasing engagement with that group in the future.

The Conference and Education committees are hard at work making sure to deliver an outstanding and expanded conference. These committees accepted the challenge of putting together an expanded EMS track with OEMS at the eleventh hour. Our thanks to the committees for a job well done and a huge thank you!

The last couple of months have been filled with a great amount of behind the scenes work by all focusing on many issues, but particularly HB2175 and the OEMS issue. If we are to stay out front as the leader of emergency services in the Commonwealth then we need your help. If you're not involved please get involved we need help and member outreach to our localities more than ever with our goals and priorities for the next few years. HB2175 funding is a long game and we need the team members to go the distance.

I know the organization is in good hands with President-Elect Cooper who will be sworn in during the Awards and Recognition Ceremony at the Virginia Fire Rescue Conference.

In closing I would like to leave you with this oath to ponder, it hung in my father's office while he served as a City Manager for over forty years. It talks of the "City" but if you research the Athenian Oath it is grounded in the premise about the duty of a leader taking care of the city or family leaving it in a great place for future leaders. The Athenian Oath - "We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice.

We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many.

We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught.

We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty.

Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

Again thank you for all you do and for a great year. See you at the Beach!

Stay safe and return to quarters.





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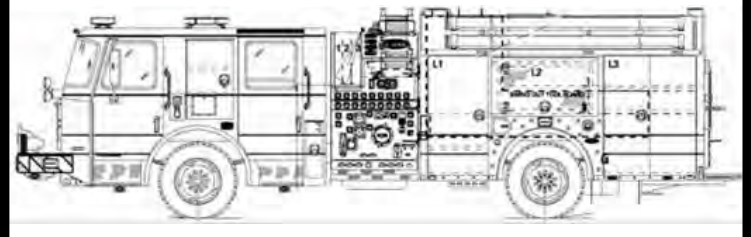
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# 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL VFCF BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENT WILLIAMSBURG

Amanda Deal

James City County Fire Department had the pleasure of hosting the 9th Annual Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation Golf Tournament in Williamsburg on September 22nd at Kiskiack Golf Club. The days leading up to our event, we were threatened with a tropical storm, fortunately for us, the weather held off and we had a fantastic day!

There were a total 64 golfers and numerous generous sponsors to ensure overall success of the tournament. Top sponsors for this tournament consisted of the following: Dick Singer, Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Paul Davis Restoration, Marina Electrical Equipment, Henderson, Inc. Other sponsors included: East Coast Emergency Lighting, Kamco Services, Chesterfield Insurers, C.A. Barrs Contractor, Inc., Spain Commercial, and Zoll.

Hole sponsors included: ACI Fire & Safety, East Coast Emergency Lighting, Pyramid Roofing, Streamline Roofing, Chesterfield insurers, Paul's Deli & Neighborhood Restaurant, College Delly, Paul's Deli, Greenleaf Café, Moe's Southwest Grill, Pierces Pitt BBQ, James Bales Financial, Maryland Fire Equipment, Citizens and Farmers Bank.

Between the golfers and our sponsors, we raised over \$12K from this event to benefit the Foundation! These funds will be used to provide scholarship opportunities to fire and EMS providers and/or immediate family across Virginia.

James City County Fire Department wishes to provide special acknowledgement to Jim Dishner for being a crucial team member for acquiring donations, Elisabeth Eberhardt for offering her knowledge, Nick Zanca with Kiskiack Golf Club for being wonderful to work with and Chris Eudailey for walking us through every step of the process. We could not have done with without your support. This being our first time hosting a golf tournament, I think we're getting into the swing of things! We are very excited to host again next year for more Hole-hearted fun!

The 10th Annual Williamsburg tournament will be Friday, September 13, 2024 at Kiskiack Golf Club.







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# VFCA HOLDS ANNUAL RETREAT

Vance Cooper, 1st Vice President

The VFCA held their annual retreat October 12 & 13 in Harrisonburg VA. Harrisonburg Fire Chief, Matt Tobia organized the location and venues where we had great comradery and fun as well as performed required VFCA business. Fire Chief Kevin Good from Ft Belvoir got us off to a great start by leading us in physical fitness. This has become a staple at the VFCA Retreat & Summit along with the Virginia Fire & Rescue Conference and sets an example of taking good care of yourself.

The focus of the retreat is to deliver on our core mission of providing leadership, education and advocacy as well as set the direction for next year. This was accomplished over these two days, as we formed a small group to further quantify and communicate Virginia's Fire Service needs of Staffing, Apparatus, Training & Equipment to our VFCA Districts legislators. Additionally, we are collaborating with Virginia Professional Firefighters for improved health screening, especially in cancer prevention. We are also supporting Loudon County Fire Chief Keith Johnson with advancing the need for sprinkler requirements within the building codes. Chief Johnson represents us on the Board of Housing & Community Development. On Friday, Dr RAAB a Chemistry Professor from JMU and a Hazmat member of Harrisonburg FD, gave a timely presentation on PFOS/PFAS and what we know and don't know. The presentation shows that a lot is still unknown, but studies are ongoing and need to continue since these forever chemicals are found just about anywhere. Luckily for all of us the IAFF has taken a big lead in this area, and we are all awaiting the findings of this report late this year. Finally, our focus next year will remain with HB 2175, improving cancer screenings and adding requirements for sprinklers within the building code.

If you need more information about the VFCA and what is going on, please reach out to your District VP which you can find inside the Commonwealth Chief Magazine or Virginia Fire Chiefs Association - Home Page (vfca.us)

Look forward to seeing everyone at the Virginia Fire Rescue Conference in Virginia Beach, February 19-24, 2024. Registration is OPEN!



L to R: Past President John Prillman, Salem Fire, President Alan Baldwin, York County Fire and Vance Cooper, 1st Vice President.



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# 2ND ANNUAL VFCA FEDERAL/MILITARY SECTION SUMMIT HELD

Julian Crolet

On 10/16/2023 fire service personnel of all ranks met in Williamsburg for the 2nd Annual VFCA Federal/Military Section Summit. Leaders from Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, USAG Fort Belvoir, Warrenton Training Center, NASA, Norfolk, Camp Perry, and Langley AFB were all in attendance. The summit included presentations on the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, Creating and Maintaining a Culture of Accountability, as well as a shared discussion on current challenges/solutions.

The presentation from the Firefighter Cancer Support network was presented by Steve Weissman. He discussed emerging occupational cancer trends and best practices for exposure reduction. He presented eye opening statistics and current legislation that impact both federal and municipal firefighters. We discussed the resources available and the importance of the National Cancer Registry.

Creating and Maintaining a Culture of Accountability was presented by Deputy Chief Tim McKay. This program used an interactive lecture format to engage attendees in the process of defining personal accountability, developing the skills to hold others accountable, and creating a culture of volunteered accountability as part of a recipe for organizational success. Topics such as integrity, seeking input from others, willingness, and methods to have the tough conversations when needed, and focusing on relationships as opposed to rules were discussed.

A shared discussion on current challenges/solutions was presented by NASA (Wallops Island) Fire Chief John Mitchell. He facilitated discussion on staffing, apparatus and maintenance, community involvement, engaging partners and many other fire service challenges.

Thank you to all the presenters and a special thanks to the planning team that coordinated all aspects of the day

George Boedecker, Battalion Chief

Robert Eagan, Fire Chief

John Mitchell, Fire Chief

Ty Burch, Captain

Are you currently a member of Virginia's Federal Fire Service and wanting to get more involved? Opportunities exist within the VFCA Federal/Military Section for networking, summits, Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference Presentations, Commonwealth Chief Articles, VFCA Working Committees, scholarships and so much more.

We are looking for you!



Steve Weissman from FF Cancer Support Network discusses emerging occupational cancer trends and best practices for exposure reduction.



Summit participants.



Chief Tim McKay addresses attendees.



NASA (Wallops Island) Fire Chief John Mitchell facilitates discussion on staffing, apparatus and maintenance, community involvement, engaging partners and other fire service challenges.

Photo's: Julian Crolet



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10" NEWTON REAR DUMP | 360HP CUMMINS

# COMPANY OFFICER SUMMIT HELD

Michael Hirsh

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Company Officer Section just wrapped up the 2023 Company Officer Summit. Two full days were focused on Planning and Preparing for Promotion. Students explored what it takes to be prepared mentally, academically, physically and emotionally to accept the challenge. Attendees saw the raw side of what it means to accept that bar or bugle, hurdles in the promotional process, success and failures that have made these local leaders who they are.

Emphasis during the summit was placed on not only technical knowledge of promoting, but also leadership, formal and informal fire house communication skills, and adaptability to address the diverse challenges faced by the fire service today. Continuous professional development and a commitment to community engagement was shown to be significant factors in the success of those seeking promotion. The Summit was closed out by a mental health champion that helped those in attendance “Read the smoke” in the area of mental health and how to prioritize self-care, crew mental health, raise awareness and provide avenues for support and coping.

Company Officer Summit 2023 was a huge success in part to the unwavering support of our sponsors which played a pivotal role in bringing the summit to Central Virginia for no cost. We extend our deepest appreciation to Chief Senter, Chesterfield Fire and EMS, Mission BBQ Midlothian, Mission BBQ Hull Street, Zoll, and Fire-Dex for their generosity and commitment. They contributed significantly to the realization of our goals for future leaders of the fire service. Their partnership has not only enhanced the quality of our Summit but has also strengthened the bond within the fire service community and look forward to their continued support.

We are thrilled to announce the upcoming VFCA Company Officer Summit 2024, November 14th and 15th. Save the date for this exciting event where we’ll delve into insightful discussions, share ideas and foster meaningful relationships in the fire community. While our theme is yet to be unveiled, we anticipate a dynamic Summit that will inspire and engage. Stay tuned on social media and the VFCA website as we plan a Company Officer Summit that you won’t want to miss.



BC Ryan Passera from King George Fire Rescue & Emergency Services speaks to the group



Stephanie White discusses “Kitchen Table Accountability”



Chief Loy Senter welcomes attendees



Chief Tim McKay talks about “Leadership on the Road to Promotion”



The graduates of 2023 Company Officer Summit.

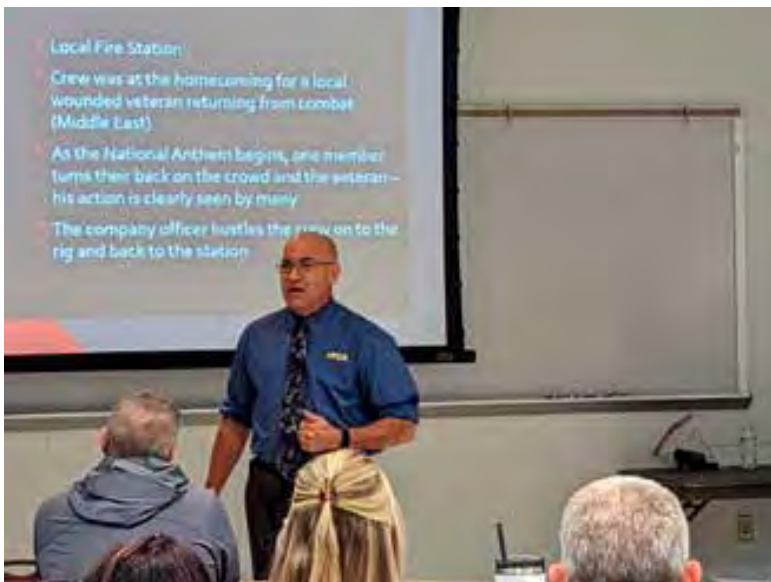
Photos: Willie West



"The Good, The Bad & The Ugly of Leadership" with Chief Jay Cullinan



Asst. Fire Chief David Lewis wraps up day two of the Summit



Chief Matt Tobia hitting the ground running after a great lunch provided by Mission BBQ



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# Help keep residents safe during a natural gas emergency

Every day, natural gas is safely and efficiently delivered to millions of businesses and homes in the United States through more than 2 million miles of underground pipeline.

Virginia Natural Gas operates, secures and maintains the pipeline in our service territory. With safety being our highest priority, we adhere to federal, state and local pipeline safety regulations by performing extensive quality control checks, educate the public on natural gas pipeline, leak recognition and damage prevention and work closely with emergency and public officials to develop emergency response plans.

## How to recognize a pipeline leak

- **LOOK** for blowing dirt, discolored vegetation or continued bubbling of standing water.
- **LISTEN** for a hissing or roaring noise near a natural gas appliance or line.
- **SMELL** for the distinctive, rotten-egg odor associated with natural gas. Natural gas is colorless and odorless, so we add a chemical odorant called mercaptan for easy detection of a suspected natural gas leak. This odorant has a distinctive "rotten egg" type odor. You should act any time you detect even a small amount of this odor in the air. Be aware that "odorant fade," while uncommon, can occur. Odorant fade occurs when a physical or chemical process causes the level of odorant in the gas to be reduced. This can happen in both existing gas pipe and new installations.

*Note: Be aware that "odorant fade," while uncommon, can occur. Odorant fade occurs when a physical or chemical process causes the level of odorant in the gas to be reduced. This can happen in both existing gas pipe and new installations. Be aware that some individuals may not be able to detect the smell of the natural gas odorant because they have a diminished sense of smell, because the scent is being masked by other odors in the area or because the odorant has diminished so that it is not detectable. Some gas lines, due to their unique function, may not have odor at all.*

## Learn more

For more information about natural gas and emergency response procedures and training, contact us at **800.552.7473**.

To learn about our emergency response plan, which recognizes and mitigates threats and also sustains the integrity of the pipelines. Visit [virginianaturalgas.com/integritymanagementplan](https://virginianaturalgas.com/integritymanagementplan).

## Complete your training today!

Earn a one-hour training credit and certificate of course completion while learning about the importance of natural gas pipeline safety.

[virginianaturalgas.com/respondertraining](https://virginianaturalgas.com/respondertraining)  
(Use password: virginia)

## Help keep everyone safe during a natural gas emergency

Even though natural gas pipeline incidents are uncommon, it is still important to be prepared by knowing the signs of a potential problem.

You should take the following action any time you detect any of the signs of a pipeline leak:

- **DO NOT** try to identify the source to stop the leak yourself.
- **AVOID** using any sources of ignition, such as cell phones, cigarettes, matches, flashlights, electronic devices, motorized vehicles, light switches or landlines, as natural gas can ignite from a spark or open flame, possibly causing a fire or explosion. Natural gas is non-toxic, lighter than air and displaces oxygen. In severe cases, if not used properly, natural gas can also lead to asphyxiation.
- **CALL** Virginia Natural Gas immediately at our 24-hour emergency response line **800.552.7473** with the location and type of emergency.
- **SECURE** the area by establishing a safety zone around the incident and control access. You may need to reroute traffic and evacuate area homes and businesses.

## How we respond

Once we are notified of the emergency, we will immediately dispatch trained personnel to the site, keeping you informed of our progress. We will take all necessary actions to correct the problem. We will work together to ensure our community is safe.

## Prevention – the best defense against leaks

Emergency officials and first responders do their part daily to prevent natural gas leaks by keeping the following safety tips in mind:

- Understand that natural gas is lighter than air and displaces oxygen. Although natural gas is non-toxic, in extreme cases of oxygen displacement, it may lead to asphyxiation. Natural gas has a risk of ignition near a spark or open flame.
- Know where the pipelines are in your jurisdiction. If you notice any missing or damaged pipeline markers, contact Virginia Natural Gas at **1.877.572.3342** so they can be replaced.
- Virginia law requires all underground utilities be marked before any type of digging or excavation. Be on the lookout for any suspicious activity or unauthorized digging. If the excavator has not notified the state of their intent to dig, they must stop all activity immediately. The excavator is required to present a valid dig ticket number when requested by first responders. Also, no one, including homeowners, should be digging, ditching, drilling, leveling or plowing without having first contacted our state's One-Call number (**811**) to locate underground utilities.
- Remember, pipeline markers, like the sample pictured, indicate only the general area of the pipeline and not the exact location or depth. Pipeline markers may not be present in all areas.
- Information about transmission pipelines operating in your community is available through the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) and online at: [npms.phmsa.dot.gov](https://npms.phmsa.dot.gov).



 Virginia Natural Gas



## Online Survey

Please take a moment to complete a survey about natural gas safety and you by scanning the QR code or visiting [surveymonkey.com/r/FV2MQPB](https://surveymonkey.com/r/FV2MQPB) to help us make sure we are keeping our communities safe.

# Sneak Preview

**Coming Soon!**

**February 19 – 24, 2024**

**Virginia Beach**

VIRGINIA  
**FIRE**   
**+ RESCUE**  
CONFERENCE

# 2024 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 19, 2024 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024

## Emergency Medical Services Training Preview

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The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services are excited to present an expanded EMS Training program at the 2024 Virginia Fire Rescue Conference.

The VFRC HOT Program will include two hands-on-training programs.

### Emergency Medical Services Operations Course

The 16-Hour EMS Operations course will focus on burns and inhalation Injuries that comprehensively covers various burn types, burn severity assessment, and symptoms of carbon monoxide and cyanide poisoning. It offers practical guidance on using the LIFEPAK 15 Rainbow cable and the Cyanokit, and provides hands-on training in airway management, intubation, pain management, IV administration, and burn care. A lecture on fire ground rehabilitation that focuses on effective techniques for different weather scenarios and involves tabletop drills and hands-on practice. The "Firefighter Down MAYDAY" presentation emphasizes treating injured firefighters, removing contaminated gear, assessing non-fire-related injuries, and safe transport, while practical exercises involve trauma assessment, gear removal, transport goals, and ER turnover. This track will join the other training programs on day two with live fire scenarios for hands-on patient transfers from the fire ground to the ambulance and hospital.

### NAEMT TECC - Advanced Tactics Course

The NAEMT TECC - Advanced Tactics 16-Hour Course is based in evidence-based combat medicine, TECC presents the three phases of tactical casualty care and integrates nomenclature familiar to civilian EMS, Fire, and Law Enforcement: Hot Zone: Direct Threat Care - Patient care rendered while under attack, in adverse, or otherwise imminently dangerous conditions. Warm Zone: Indirect Threat Care - Patient care rendered while the threat has been suppressed but may resurface at any point. Cold Zone: Evacuation Care - Patient care rendered while the patient is being evacuated from the incident site. TECC focuses on the medicine during these phases of care and provides guidelines for managing trauma in the civilian tactical or hazardous environment. While TECC has a tactical slant, it takes an all-hazards approach to providing care outside the normal operating conditions of most EMS agencies, such as responding to a mass casualty or active shooter event.

In addition to these courses, there are almost thirty EMS based courses being offered throughout the entire week of the conference.

Attendees will be granted Virginia Office of EMS continuing education hours for almost every course being offered at the 2024 Virginia Fire Rescue Conference.



REGISTRATION IS OPEN  
FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO  
[WWW.VFCA.US](http://WWW.VFCA.US)



**2024 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE**  
**FEBRUARY 19, 2024 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024**

**Emergency Medical Services  
Training Preview**

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**Evidence-Based Guidelines for  
Prehospital Airway Management**

Monday, February 19, 2024

**Managing the Agitated Patient**

Monday, February 19, 2024

**EMS Operations – HOT Program**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024 through Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**What the Heck is PECC?**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Mass Matters but Speed Always Wins**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Evidence Based Guidelines for  
Prehospital Pain Management**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Oxygen Smoxygen,  
Just Give a Lot to Everyone or Not?**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Pediatric Trauma, Cases Through the Ages**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Shock Attack - Cardiogenic Shock in the Field**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**EHAC and STEMI Metrics -  
How Community Outreach and EMS  
Contribute to Better Outcomes**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024



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FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO  
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**2024 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE**  
**FEBRUARY 19, 2024 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024**

**Emergency Medical Services  
Training Preview**

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**Hospital Area Command**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**Medical Calls: Controversies in EMS**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**Trauma Calls: Controversies in EMS**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**NAEMT TECC - Advanced Tactics Course - HOT Program**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024 through Thursday, February 22, 2024

**Preparing for Virginia Board of Pharmacy  
Licensing or Inspection**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**Stress First Aid - Train-the-Trainer**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024 through Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**It's Still Killing Us,  
Cardiac Event Prevention for Firefighters**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**The Names Have Been Changed to Protect the Guilty**

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**Durable Do Not Resuscitate DDNR  
Regulatory Update 2024**

Thursday, February 22, 2024

**EMS Systems Funding, Grants and More!**

Thursday, February 22, 2024



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FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO  
[WWW.VFCA.US](http://WWW.VFCA.US)



# 2024 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 19, 2024 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024

## Emergency Medical Services Training Preview

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### Fire/EMS and the Rescue Task Force

Thursday, February 22, 2024

### The Day I Never Thought Would Come: Dealing with a Line of Duty Death

Thursday, February 22, 2024

### Cancer...You are at Risk!

Thursday, February 22, 2024

### Small Bites:

### A Tactical and Strategic Approach to First Responder Well-being

Friday, February 23, 2024

### Mental Health MAYDAYs

Friday, February 23, 2024

### The Four F's

Friday, February 23, 2024

### Don't Drop Me!

### An EMS Patient Handling Update

Saturday, February 24, 2024

### Volunteer Fundraising: Relationships and Participation

Saturday, February 24, 2024

### Fixed Object Strike Prevention and Common FADO Mishaps

Saturday, February 24, 2024



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[WWW.VFCA.US](http://WWW.VFCA.US)



**2024 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE**  
**FEBRUARY 19, 2024 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024**

## Technology Training

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### Stationary Energy Storage System Emergencies

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

The course will provide an overview of battery energy storage system equipment, safety features including methods for explosion control, electrical safety, fire testing, lessons learned and design recommendations. The course will cover the scene size-up along with the hazards and response tactics necessary to safely manage various battery storage system emergencies.

### Lithium Ion Batteries as a Weapon

Friday, February 23, 2024

This course is designed to cover the science of lithium ion batteries, local and national events, discussion on fire as a weapon and discuss to dangers of lithium ion batteries and the ability for them to be used as a weapon.

### Data Centers and ESS Facilities: The challenges they present to the fire service.

Friday, February 23, 2024

This course is designed to discuss the challenges that the fire service may face when responding to data centers and energy storage systems.

### Lithium Ion Batteries 101 for the Fire Service

Saturday, February 24, 2024

The Lithium Ion Batteries 101 for the Fire Service was created to teach the basic science of lithium ion batteries, discuss local and national events relating from everything from a personal/micro mobility device, electric vehicles, energy storage systems to data centers. This class will cover the latest strategy and tactics for responding to these calls and also post incident considerations.



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# MEET THE CHIEF



## Getting to know Mike Armstrong.

*In this issue we will meet one of the many fire chiefs who will be spotlighted in Commonwealth Chief this year. Here we take a look at Mike Armstrong, Fire Chief-Emergency Management Coordinator, City of Bristol, VA*

### **CC: Describe your tenure in the fire service...**

MA: I have been involved in the fire service for over 35 years.

### **CC: Please describe your career journey...**

MA: I began my service with the Vinton Volunteer Fire Department while still in high school. After high school I served four years on active duty with the US Army (1984 to 1988). Upon receiving my Honorable Discharge, I set out to make the fire service a career. In 1988 I went to work for the Roanoke Fire Department and was part of the evolution into what is now known as Roanoke Fire-EMS. I retired in 2012 and accepted a position as the Deputy Chief for Augusta County Fire-Rescue. After a little over a year, the position was eliminated and I then took a position as the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Salem VA Medical Center. I was not yet done with the fire service. I was offered the position of Fire Chief for the City of Bristol, VA. I have served as Fire Chief-Emergency Management Coordinator for nearly nine years

### **CC: Please describe your Form of Government...**

MA: The City of Bristol operates under the City Council-Manager form of government.

### **CC: Describe the sources of Funding for Your Organization...**

MA: The Bristol Fire Department is funded primarily through the City's general fund. A few years ago, we put an ALS ambulance in service and implemented billing for EMS revenue recovery. Those funds are allocated to the general fund. We receive State grant funds such as Fire Programs Aid-To-Locality and EMS Return-to-Locality. Our Special Operations Teams both receive grant funding from VDEM. We have been very fortunate over the past few years to have received FEMA AFG funding for SCBA and radio replacements.

### **CC: What population does your department serve...**

MA: The City of Bristol serves a population of slightly above 17,000.

### **CC: How many square miles do you cover...**

MA: We cover approximately 13 square miles that lie between the Virginia/Tennessee state line and Washington County, VA.

### **CC: Describe the department composition...**

MA: Founded in 1894, the Bristol Fire Department is an all career organization operating out of three fire stations. There are 43 FTEs that include the Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, Office Administrator, Battalion Chiefs, Captains, Lieutenants, Driver-Operators, and Firefighter/EMTs.

### **CC: Describe the department equipment...**

MA: Each day, we staff two engines, a 105' aerial ladder, an ALS medic unit, and a battalion chief. We also have a reserve 100' tower ladder, reserve engine, air trailer, Fire Marshal and Fire Chiefs Tahoe's, and various utility vehicles. The department provides regional special operations for HTR and Hazardous Materials. In partnering with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the department is home to Virginia Task Force 4 Technical Rescue Team and the Southwest VA Regional Hazardous Materials Team. Both teams maintain a large inventory of special operations equipment and vehicles.

### **CC: Describe your call summary...**

MA: Our call volume has increased over the past five years, mainly because of putting an ALS ambulance in service. The department now responds to approximately 4,000 calls annually.

### **CC: What is the most challenging issue or issues facing your department today?**

MA: We are faced with the same issues as other fire departments. The area economy is still recovering, post-COVID 19. Aside from the economy and how it impacts the local government budget, I would say the biggest challenges are our current staffing level and recruiting/retention. We are struggling to recruit new members and have lost a few personnel to other departments and some to other occupations.

We have an aging population in Bristol and have seen a huge increase in related calls for service. Also, with the new businesses opening in 2024 such as Hard Rock Resort and Casino I feel that we will need additional staffing to meet the growing service demands. Like many departments in the Commonwealth, we are not seeing the applications like we did in the past. It is getting much more difficult to attract new Firefighter/EMTs.

**CC: How would you describe your management style?**

MA: I employ a "participative management" style of leadership that allows subordinate officers to make decisions with minimal guidance from me. We are a very small organization and do not have administrative staff so I delegate many large-scale projects/programs to others who have the ability and willingness to manage a major department level project or program that would otherwise fall by the wayside. I have found this creates ownership in the organization when others have a say in how things are managed. They do not ask my permission when making a decision regarding their program. They simply keep me informed with how things are going, if any problems arise, and if they need help from me (rarely).

Examples of these department level projects and programs include researching, purchasing and managing personal protective equipment, researching and purchasing uniforms, apparatus maintenance and repair, new apparatus and equipment, oversight of our public education program, and hiring and promotion processes.

Each of the project or program leaders are provided a line item from the department budget to be used to manage their respective project and program. Program leaders have gained a solid understanding of project management and purchasing procedures, obtaining bids/quotes, developing specifications, compliance with local government procurement, etc.

**CC: Does your department have a formal, long-range strategic plan?**

MA: We just completed the first ever five-year plan which highlights specific areas we will work towards over the next five years. It is considered a "living" document and will be updated both annually and as needed as we move forward.

**CC: How have current economic times impacted your department?**

MA: We have had to tighten our belts a great deal over the past several years. COVID-19 made it worse. After years of consistent budget reductions, things have begun to slowly improve (post-COVID). As we have begun to recover economically from the pandemic, businesses are starting to realize a new normal. Some new businesses are opening such as the new Bristol Casino, Future Home of Hard Rock. It opened in July of 2022 and has been a huge success. The new Bristol Hard Rock Resort and Casino project is projected to fully open in the summer of 2024. Additionally, there have been several small businesses open to support the larger Hard Rock project.

**CC: Are you doing things differently today because of the economy?**

MA: In lieu of the current economy, we pursue very few Capital projects. Many projects have been deferred. We have been able to replace a few pieces of fire apparatus over the past few years by using a lease/purchase program instead of traditional capital purchases. We were also able to obtain an EMS Rescue Squad Assistance Fund grant to purchase a new ambulance. We rely heavily on grant funding.

**CC: What challenges do you see facing the fire service today?**

MA: We are no different than most other fire departments in that recruiting and retention is a growing challenge. In Southwest Virginia there is a lot of competition for public safety employees, especially firefighter/EMTs as we compete with Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee. In years past all applicants were trained and certified as Firefighters and EMTs before they were hired. Now, we are looking for individuals who are physically capable, a team

player, and someone who possesses a positive attitude. We will find a way to provide the training

Like most fire departments, we are challenged by the rising cost of equipment, such as a set of PPE. We strive to have all personnel in two sets of PPE as part of our cancer prevention effort. So that is a huge challenge. Additionally, we are now at a time where we need to replace a few pieces of front-line fire apparatus. The cost increases and order times for new apparatus has become very difficult to budget for because of the constant price increases and not knowing how the price may change with the order/delivery times over 40 months with some of the manufacturers.

Bristol is host to numerous outdoor events each year. We recognize the potential for active shooter events. Over the past couple of years, we have developed an Active Shooter Program and begun to conduct full-scale exercises with our law enforcement partners. Some of our fire department members now instruct new police recruits at the Southwest Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy on "rescue task force" tactics, unified command, and EMS.

Additionally, we expanded our Active Shooter Program to also include instructing all public-school staff on Stop-the-Bleed techniques. We received generous donations from the public and were able to purchase several Stop-the-Bleed kits. As staff at each school is trained, we leave them with a cache of Stop-the-Bleed kits. We also include City of Bristol employees in this training.

According to the CDC, someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds in the United States. Because of our aging population in Bristol we have begun to focus on the community and find ways we can enhance their well-being. We are now teaching Compress and Shock CPR to the public. At a recent Compress and Shock event in Bristol, we were able to leave a church group with a free AED donated through the Compress and Shock Foundation.

**CC: What do you look for in a new recruit?**

MA: In the past we were able to hire candidates who already possessed Firefighter and EMT training and certification. Those days are gone. We rarely see a candidate who is already trained. Now, we look for a team player with a positive attitude, the potential to learn new things and the ability to constantly evolve and embrace change. Bring a good attitude and we will provide the rest.

**CC: How do you view training?**

MA: I served as a VDFP Adjunct Instructor for nearly 30 years, so I believe you could say I am "pro" training. I also feel there is a place in the fire service for higher education, but it cannot replace experience. I recommend someone have the big three; training, higher education, and street experience to be well-rounded, especially if you plan to advance through the ranks.

I view training as a key component of succession planning. I learned from former Fire Chief Tommy Fuqua years ago that you have to have folks prepared to advance through the ranks. As we age out of the "fire service" there has to be qualified members ready to move into the upper ranks as these retirements occur.

**CC: Do you have a close working relationship with neighboring departments?**

MA: We rely heavily on both Bristol, Tennessee and Washington County (VA) for automatic and mutual aid. We respond to fire alarms together, train together, and support each other on a daily basis. A typical downtown fire alarm will bring fire apparatus from both Bristol, Virginia and Bristol, Tennessee.

# VFCA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**CC: What's in the future for the fire service as you see it?**

MA: In the immediate future, it's people and apparatus. Leaders must continue to evolve and adapt their leadership styles to foster strong relationships with the new members entering the public safety workforce. Many of us who entered the service decades ago did it primarily for the "love of the job" and getting paid was a bonus for doing something we loved. Today, some members getting into the fire service may not "love" the job as we did, but they are highly capable and do a great job. They are simply motivated by other aspects. But, this is a non-issue if folks do not apply for these jobs. We must find a way to recruit and manage talent for both volunteer and career organizations.

As far as apparatus, the order/delivery times and cost of new fire apparatus and ambulances is pretty much beyond crisis level. As the new Fire Chief in Bristol in 2015, I purchased a demo pumper for \$340k. Now, the same truck is closer to \$840k and takes about 3.5 years for delivery. Something is going to have to change. Local governments cannot afford these huge price increases. We are already seeing delays in new apparatus purchases. We are simply hanging on to the current fleet because of the huge expense in replacement.

**CC: How has being a member of the VFCA helped you become a better chief/leader?**

MA: For me, the VFCA offers a huge networking system which creates a great benefit. The potential to network with professionals from all over the Commonwealth is priceless. The annual Fire Rescue Conference is a "must attend" event that offers a great variety of learning opportunities. It is one of the best values in fire/EMS/EM training.

The Chief's Summit is an automatic "yes". I try not to miss it and now try to bring one of my chiefs for their career development. Again, the networking potential is vast. I always go home with great ideas.



## January

16	Executive Officers Meeting 1000 Hours	Virtual
18	VFCA Lobby Day in Richmond	

## February

19-24	Virginia Fire Rescue Conference 0800	VA Beach
22	VFCA Full Board Meeting 1000 hours	VA Beach
22	Fire Board Committee Meetings	VA Beach
23	Fire Board 1000 Hours	VA Beach

## March

02	Shakers Forum	TBD
15	Women of Fire & EMS Summit 0800	TBD
19	Executive Officers Meeting 1000 Hours	Virtual
23	5th Annual VFCF 5K Run/Walk 0730 Hours	Williamsburg

## April

16	VFCA Full Board Meeting 1000 Hours	Glen Allen - VDFP
24	2024 National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner & Symposium	

## May

4-5	NFFF Memorial Weekend	
5-11	National Arson Awareness Week	
9-10	10th Annual Chiefs Summit 0800 Hours	Glen Allen
19-25	National EMS Week	
21	Executive Officers Meeting 1000 Hours	Virtual
31	14th VFCF Spotsylvania Golf Tournament 1100 Hours	Spotsylvania

## June

23-28	VFOA/VCOA 1500	U of R
18	VFCA Full Board Meeting 1000 Hours	VDFP

# VIRGINIA'S 2023 FALL WILDFIRE SEASON HITS HARD: NEARLY 25,000 ACRES BURN

John Miller, VDOF

On November 21, 2023, a statewide precipitation event brought an end to Virginia's worst fall wildfire season in 30 years. Over the course of the 34 days prior to the rain, the Virginia Department of Forestry suppressed 142 fires that burned 13,305 acres in the Commonwealth. One additional fire on federally managed national forest lands in Bedford and Rockbridge County added an additional 11,100 acres to this total. On the positive side of things, DOF responders, over this same period, are credited with protecting 196 homes and 268 other structures with a protected value of more than 42.3 million dollars.

This year's fall 2023 wildfire season was marked by a number of especially notable events, at least by Virginia standards. On November 6, 2023, Governor Youngkin declared a state of emergency due to the ongoing wildfire activity. The state of emergency opened up the use of National Guard resources that included three National Guard Blackhawk helicopters with 660-gallon water buckets and a crew of 30 National Guard firefighters that ultimately helped to wrap up the suppression work on the Quaker Run fire in Madison County. This was only the third time in the last 20 years that National Guard assets were deployed to provide wildfire suppression assistance in Virginia. The DOF also brought in outside help from fellow state forestry agencies in both Pennsylvania and Washington. The DOF has only brought in out of state fire suppression help one other time over the last 30 years, and that was during the fall 2001 fire season.

Prior to the fall of 2023, the most notable fall fire season in recent memory occurred in the fall of 2001. The acreage burned across the Commonwealth during the 2023 season was nearly three times the acreage burned in the fall of 2001, and that doesn't include the additional 11,100 acres that occurred on federal lands with the Matt's Creek fire in Bedford and Rockbridge Counties. The DOF's largest wildfires of this fall season included the Quaker Run fire in Madison County (3,937 acres), the Rocklick fire in Buchanan County (2,232 acres), the Hoover Camp fire in Buchanan County (1,402 acres), the Tuggles Gap fire in Patrick County (1,150 acres), and the Rachel's Chapel fire in Dickenson County (1,135 acres).

Finally, it is important to realize that the DOF is not able to respond to every wildfire that impacts the Commonwealth. In nearly every case, the DOF is responding to a wildfire that already is being handled at the local level by Virginia's structural fire service. Conservative estimates place Virginia's total wildfire load at 2 to 3 times the number that are reported by the DOF. It is only through the success of Virginia's fire service working together on each and every incident that helps to limit the annual impact of wildfires in the Commonwealth.



Matts Creek Wildfire

Photo: Buddy Phillips



Quaker Run Wildfire affected 3,937 acres on private, state and federal lands.

Photo: Staunton News Leader



Afton Mountain wildfire.

Photo: Wintergreen Fire & Rescue



# Virginia Department of Forestry

## Partnerships Builds Success

It takes dedicated individuals and agency support to achieve goals and successes that to many seem impossible.



# Don't Suffer in Silence

Emergency responders face unique levels of stress, risk, and unpredictability every day. This can take a toll on your mental health.



Photo courtesy of Lauralee Veitch



See resources at [NVFC.com](http://NVFC.com)

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# UPDATES FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Lauren Opett, Director of Communications & Senior Advisor, VDEM

## VDEM and Virginia Emergency Support Team Support Statewide Wildfire Response Efforts



On November 6, 2023, Governor Youngkin declared a State of Emergency to provide support to the wildfires occurring across the Commonwealth. While VDEM staff had been in communication with affected localities and agencies prior to the declaration, on November 6, the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) activated to a monitoring status. As fires continued to grow and ignite, the VEST transitioned to Orange: Partial Activation on Thursday, November 9 and remained activated through November 21 in support of our local, state, and federal partners.

The primary role of VDEM and the VEST was to coordinate resource requests and assist with planning and reporting efforts. The team came together both in the field and at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center. The first local declaration of emergency came from Madison County on October 26th due to the threat of the Quaker Run Fire. This was the trigger for VDEM to begin supporting the wildfire response. Staff from VDEM Region 2 integrated with Virginia Department of Forestry and Madison County to assist in obtaining necessary resources and obtain situational awareness of the fire's impacts. VDEM remained engaged in Madison until the fire was fully contained on November 17th. Questions regarding authority for burn bans and water restrictions were quickly answered by VDEM staff to ensure consistency across the Commonwealth. Ultimately, there were 48 local burn bans issued, 21 local declarations of emergency, and one local water restriction issued.

Fires in VDEM Regions 2, 3, 4, and 6 had VDEM supporting VDOF and many localities throughout the month of November, most notably during the Tuggles Gap Fire in Patrick County and Matts Creek Fire in Bedford County. As those fires began to spark across the Commonwealth, VDOF recognized the need for additional resources, including National Guard aviation assets. VDEM was authorized through the Governors Declaration to task the National Guard to support wildfire suppression and mop-up with three aviation assets and 30 guardsmen. Additionally, while VDEM did not officially deploy a state Incident Management Team to Patrick County, Region 6 coordinated with local IMT members to support Patrick County with information and resource management and it was all hands on deck with the Matts Creek Fire to make sure the fire did not spread off of federal land onto private land in Bedford or Floyd County. In addition to the support above, VDEM also coordinated a Joint Information System that included several state, local, and federal partners responsible for coordinating media inquiries and daily talking points for state leadership. VDEM valued the opportunity to learn about VDOF capabilities and resource mechanisms as well as support the localities in responding during this year's fire season.

## A MOST SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OUR 2023 VIRGINIA FIRE RESCUE CONFERENCE SPONSORS!

We are pleased to be able to recognize these Companies that have gone above and beyond this year and that have continued to support the VFCA!

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## A NEW YEAR BRINGS A NEW GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO RICHMOND

The 2023 election cycle brought significant change to the makeup of the General Assembly. All 140 seats were on the ballot and due to the 2021 redistricting across the state, these campaigns occurred in newly drawn legislative districts. The Democrats narrowly took control of the House of Delegates while also maintaining their majority in the Senate chamber. The new partisan breakdown beginning in 2024 in the House chamber will be 51-49 and the Senate chamber's breakdown will be 21-19.

The shift to Democratic control of the House will bring a new Democratic Speaker along with newly elected majority and minority leaders in both chambers. Internal caucus elections determined the majority and minority leaders for both parties in each chamber. The House Democrats elected Delegate Don Scott (D-Portsmouth) as the Speaker-designee and Delegate Charniele Herring (D-Alexandria) for Majority Leaders. Senate Democrats elected Senator Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax County) as their Majority Leader. The House Republicans have elected Delegate Todd Gilbert (R-Shenandoah) for Minority Leader and the Senate Republicans have elected Senator Ryan McDougle (R-Hanover) as their Minority Leader. Due to the changes in leadership, there will be a ripple effect bringing many changes to committee assignments. While the Senate Democrats retained control of their chamber, approximately half of the members are either new to the General Assembly or new to the Senate chamber, causing a similar shake up in their committee assignments.

### **2024 Legislative Priorities:**

VFCA leadership participated in the annual fire and EMS stakeholder meeting in Oilville, VA in September. This meeting provided an opportunity for eleven stakeholders to share their top priorities to bring forth to the General Assembly. The collective chosen priorities are as follows:

- Secure Dedicated and Sustainable State Funding for High-Quality Fire and EMS Response Services Across the Commonwealth
- Secure Funding for Firefighter Cancer Screening
- Establish Tax Relief on Professional Firefighter Pensions
- Expand eligibility for 9-1-1 dispatchers and hazardous duty positions within VDFP, VDEM, and DMA firefighters to receive enhanced retirement benefits for hazardous duty service
- Realign Building Code to support allowing localities to require fire sprinklers in newly constructed townhomes

The official legislative agenda will be presented to all 140 members in both chambers prior to the start of the 2024 session for their review. This publication provides our elected officials with education on our issues from one unified voice from fire and EMS.

### **Fire Service Funding Study - HB 2175:**

As mentioned in the last edition of Commonwealth Chief, during the 2023 legislative session, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association championed successful legislation, HB 2175, requiring the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to conduct a fire and EMS funding study. The goal was to evaluate the existing fire and EMS needs across the Commonwealth, analyze sustainability of current funding, and review alternative funding models from other states. The study results were compiled by the respective stakeholders named in the enacting legislation alongside the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and was sent to the Secretary's office for review before official publication and submission to the General Assembly. The Secretary has officially reviewed and submitted the study along with recommendations for action to the General Assembly. The study will be made available to the public in the coming weeks and should be accessible on the Division of Legislative Services (DLS) website.

As a reminder, the study serves as a first step toward ensuring more sustainable resources for the delivery of fire and EMS services to communities across the Commonwealth. To secure a dedicated funding stream from the state is a heavy lift. This type of structural change to the budget will require multiple years of advocacy. Two Capitols will need the support and engagement from chiefs in every corner of the Commonwealth throughout the year to advance this issue.

### **Governor's Biennial Budget:**

Governor Glenn Youngkin has been working this year to craft his version of the state budget for the upcoming biennium. On December 20, 2023, the Governor addressed the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees jointly to reveal his designated funding priorities. The General Assembly will get the chance to review and submit their own amendments to his proposed budget. The final budget is negotiated between the two branches of state government during the 2024 legislative session.

**Virginia Fire Chiefs Richmond Lobby Day:**

The VFCA in conjunction with the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters (VFFF) will be holding a Lobby Day in Richmond on January 18, 2024. Lobby Days are used by many associations across many industries to show a unified voice and a strong presence when the legislature is in session. In small groups, VFCA members will be assigned members of the House of Delegates and Senate to meet with and share materials about our combined priorities. Two Caps will schedule these meetings ahead of time with legislators that coincide with the respective regions you serve. If you would like to participate in the VFCA/VFFF Lobby Day, please reach out to your leadership team.

*If you have any questions for your legislative team in Richmond, please feel free to contact Devon Cabot (devon@2capconsulting.com) or Maddy Busse (maddy@2capconsulting.com).*

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# 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Fire Chief's Summit



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Plans are being finalized for the 10th Annual VFCA Chiefs Summit. The event is specifically designated for the Fire Chief and his second in command.

Registration will be done online and additional information is available by early March on the VFCA website at [www.vfca.us](http://www.vfca.us)

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# RICHMOND FIRE'S RE-IMAGINED HIRING PROCESS

Steven Hall JR, MHRM, EFO, CFO, GFireE

With only \$560 Million dollars in available funding for the entire country in 2021, the SAFER grant process is highly competitive. FEMA received 1,585 applications totaling over \$2.5 Billion in requests for this grant cycle.

In September of 2022 the City of Richmond Department of Fire & Emergency Services received the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant in the amount of \$13,728,600 to support seventy-two (72) new firefighter positions in Operations. These positions were used to create four (4) 18 – person fire companies that include one (1) engine company and three (3) truck companies.

The six-month recruiting period began on the day that the award notification was made, and two classes of 36 personnel (72 total) were to be seated on March 13, 2023. Fortunately, the City of Richmond adopted an “act as if” mindset and began preparing to hire the 72 positions immediately after applying in February of 2022. This provided an additional seven months of preparation before the recruitment period.

Even with the additional time, the traditional hiring process was going to take too long to seat the new recruits by the end of the recruitment period. Under the leadership of Fire Chief Melvin D. Carter, the City of Richmond Department of Fire & Emergency Services started taking steps to modernize their hiring and training process to be more inclusive, reach a larger applicant pool, and onboard employees in half the time of previous hiring processes. By asking, “what are we trying to accomplish?” at each step, technologies that were widely adopted during the pandemic are now being leveraged to make it easier for applicants to participate and be successful in the hiring process. Applicants that join the team will also be trained in a more efficient and relevant manner. Some of the changes are outlined below.

## **Applications:**

Applications were traditionally accepted during a two week window every other year. This limited the reach of the recruiting campaign and excluded many potential applicants that never knew the Fire Department was accepting applications. Most notably, people that were about to graduate high school or college and those transitioning from the military to civilian careers were often overlooked due to timing of the application window.

Applications will now be accepted continuously, so no matter when a person decides that they are interested in pursuing a career in the fire service, they will be able to apply for the City of Richmond Department of Fire & Emergency Services.

## **Testing:**

In the past, applicant testing was conducted in-person, at a designated site, on one singular day, in a room with up to 1,000 other applicants, using pencil and paper. Scheduling in this manner did not allow all applicants to participate and for those that could make it, the testing environment was distracting and did not allow applicants the best opportunity for success.

Validated testing will now be conducted online, allowing applicants to schedule their test when it is convenient for them. This will also allow them to take the test in an environment of their choosing, to limit distractions and give them the best chance at success. The tests will be recorded and monitored to make sure all rules are followed.

## **Interviews:**

In the past, applicants were randomly scheduled for a panel interview without having any say in what day and time would best suit their needs. These interviews were conducted by multiple panels, which decreased consistency and invited the opportunity for bias. When completed, there was no way to verify how the applicant answered a question or to evaluate the interview further.

Interviews will now be recorded online by the applicant on their own time, and submitted after the applicant believes they have been able to provide the best answers possible. This allows the applicant to put their best foot forward and give a more accurate representation of themselves. The recordings will allow for a smaller group to screen the applicants and for repeated viewing of the answers if needed.

## **Physical Ability Testing:**

Applicants have traditionally been required to provide proof of passing a validated physical fitness test within six months of applying for the position or have been asked to practice for and pass a physical fitness test as part of the application process. Those applicants who could not pass the test were immediately eliminated from the process, despite the nature of the test making it hard to train and prepare for. The physical fitness testing also added months to the hiring process.

Moving forward and much like the military, applicants will be educated on the physical fitness requirements and the need to pass a validated physical fitness test as soon as they have entered the hiring process. This will allow them to begin training for the test even before they have been hired. Once they begin the recruit academy, they will be given specific physical fitness training geared towards passing the physical fitness test, which will be required before being allowed to graduate the fire academy.

The FPAT (Fireground Physical Ability Test) has been identified as a tool to assess both new hires and incumbent personnel of the Department of Fire & Emergency Services. The FPAT was designed and validated to ensure its defensibility and includes a local validation process that considers the appropriateness of the test components, specifications and cut-off score. The features can be tailored to ensure that the FPAT reflects the job in Richmond. As an added benefit, the FPAT provides “fitness by default” while using the equipment to train on specific fire department tasks.

## **Physical/Psychological/Background Screening:**

Each of these screenings has traditionally been conducted one at a time and applicants that passed one were then scheduled for the next, after all applicants completed a specific screening. This required that an applicant be available on at least three separate days, many weeks apart, to participate in this part of the process. The screenings had the potential to be very disruptive to an applicant's life and took many weeks to complete.

The screenings will now run concurrently and when possible, multiple screenings will be scheduled for the same day, reducing disruption to an applicant's day to day life and reducing the time it takes to get through these steps in the process.

### **Gear and Uniforms:**

The fire department is not immune to supply chain issues resulting in delays in ordering uniforms and turnout gear. Equipping recruits in a timely manner has previously been the source of delayed recruit academies.

Richmond Fire is now working with vendors to lease turnout gear for use during training. RFD is also keeping a cache of loaner gear in common sizes to outfit recruits during the academy. This prevents wear and tear on the new gear they will use in the field, and eliminates delays in hiring and training while their personal sets are being manufactured.

### **Training Academy:**

As the job of a firefighter has become increasingly complex, so too have the training requirements. Richmond's Fire Recruit Training Academy has traditionally lasted 24 to 26 weeks. Creative solutions are being implemented to help shorten the academy, without diluting the training that recruits receive.

Each component of the training curriculum has been evaluated for relevance and to determine whether it would be best delivered in the academy setting or if on-the-job training (OJT) would provide a better learning outcome. The components identified as best suited for OJT will be delivered after recruits are assigned to Operations, using designated "Training Companies." Training companies, which are staffed with Field Training Instructors (FTI), will coordinate with the Fire Training Academy to deliver classes such as EVOG, Pump Operator, and Aerial Operator during a recruit's probationary period. These are examples of classes that are no longer required to graduate the Recruit Training Academy, since the Driver/Pump Operator position is now a promotion within the Richmond Department of Fire & Emergency Services.

Additionally, EMT class, which has traditionally been delivered at the beginning of the academy, will be moved to the end of the academy. This will allow any recruits that are hired with current EMT certifications to be assigned to Operations up to ten weeks sooner. This will also allow those recruits that need EMT to build better study habits and study groups prior to starting the EMT curriculum.

### **Summary:**

Fire department hiring and training processes have long been deliberately exclusive. Departments sometimes had thousands of applicants and used hiring practices designed to reduce the large applicant pools down to a handful of qualified recruits. Today's environment requires a new way of thinking about hiring, which results in finding ways to maximize the number of qualified applicants in much smaller applicant pools. By continuing to examine and improve upon the hiring and training process, the Richmond Department of Fire & Emergency Services hopes to combat the staffing issues that are affecting the fire service as a whole, while finding the best qualified applicants to join our team.

### **More Information:**

More information on this topic will be available at the Virginia Fire & Rescue Conference. Chief Steven Hall JR and Grant Writer Natasha Nau will be delivering their class called "How we became a "SAFER" City" on February 22, 2024, at 1300 hours.

# **NVFC RELEASES UPDATED JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM STARTER KIT**



Is your fire department looking for a way to increase non-operational support, enhance community relations, and create a pipeline for recruitment? Then start a junior firefighter program! The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) has released an updated Junior Firefighter Program Starter Kit to help departments build the framework for a successful youth program.

Junior firefighter programs have enormous benefits for both youth participants and the department. Youth get the chance to learn about the fire and emergency services in a safe and educational way while building life skills such as teamwork, leadership, responsibility and community service. Departments get needed non-operational support as well as an excellent recruitment mechanism. These programs also strengthen the bonds between the department and the community it serves.

This Starter Kit is designed to be a turn-key tool to help departments develop a junior firefighter program with a solid foundation. It provides step-by-step guidance to bring you from securing department support to welcoming new juniors through your bay doors. Information on liability, setting requirements, finding funding, onboarding advisors, recruiting members and tools for maintaining your program are included.

Download the Starter Kit here and start building your program today!

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# ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS SECTION NEWS

Melissa Heiderman

On behalf of the entire Administrative Professionals Section (APS), we hope that you have had a happy holiday season with family and friends! The fall is always a busy time of year for the APS; our annual retreat was held in September in Harrisonburg, followed by our last quarterly meeting of the year in James City County. In addition to meetings, we have been gearing up for the annual Virginia Fire Rescue Conference ("Conference") in February in Virginia Beach. It is our goal to surpass our fundraising total from 2023, which was our largest fundraising effort to date.

The 2023 annual APS Retreat was held in Harrisonburg. Mandy Waybright, APS Vice-President, and her team in Harrisonburg did an amazing job of hosting. We'd like to thank Chief Tobia for opening Harrisonburg to us and being so welcoming. Speakers for the retreat included:

- John "JR" Dodd – Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events
- Luis Krug and Riley – Service Animal Therapy
- Gene Thompson – Personality Differences
- Erica Johnson – Making Healthy Choices

Over the years we have explored similar topics, but were able to dive deeper and view information from the perspective of our position within the fire service. It was an incredible educational opportunity over the course of the two days. In addition, we were able to explore downtown Harrisonburg, and have some quality team bonding time. Several fire service administrative professionals who had never heard of the group before found us online, attended, and signed up for membership at the retreat. We are thrilled to have new members and hopeful to continue getting our information out there.

During the retreat, elections were held for the 2024 APS Board of Directors.

Mandy Waybright, Harrisonburg – President  
Michelle Murphy, Chesapeake – Vice President  
Tracey Chewning, Spotsylvania – Secretary

We are excited for our next Board; they will do amazing work for our team!

Our next event was a quarterly meeting on December 1st in James City County. Member Amanda Deal has been gracious to host our December meeting for the past few years. Holding our December quarterly meeting in this area and team bonding are part of a great tradition that dates back several years for our section.

In February, the Virginia Fire Rescue Conference will be held in Virginia Beach. As always, the APS will be assisting with fundraising for the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation (VFCF) at the Conference in Virginia Beach in February.

We are once again asking for donations for the Conference's Silent Auction. Items can be gift baskets with various items, theme gift baskets, gift cards, food and/or snack and beverage baskets, or even gently used items. We ask that, if possible, donations with more than one item (such as gift baskets) be wrapped in cellophane, if possible. Additionally, we need a list of what is in the donation and an approximate value of each item. Donations can be dropped off at the conference, or we can make arrangements to collect donations prior to conference.

Over the past few years, the number of administrative professionals attending the conference and assisting with fundraising has grown significantly. This is in part to the support of the VFCA, but also the support of Fire Chiefs and their jurisdictions. We could not be as successful as we are without your continued support. There is still a long

way to go though. Our ultimate goal is to have representation from every jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. If you aren't a member yet, what's holding you back? Chiefs, have you asked your administrative professional this question?

I continue to ask that you please share our section information with your administrative staff and encourage them to participate. If you or your staff any questions about the section, please do not hesitate to reach out to a member of the Board. You may also visit our Facebook page at @administrativeprofessionalssection.

## VFCA Administrative Professionals Section... looking for new members



### Why belong?

- There is the opportunity for networking with your peers at your quarterly meetings and the annual conference
- There are training and educational opportunities at your meetings and at the conference
- Quarterly magazine *Commonwealth Chief*... new and updated information
- Website
- VFC Foundation Scholarship Program, several APS members have benefited
- You have become more rounded, better educated and more valuable to your organization
- Find new ways to contribute



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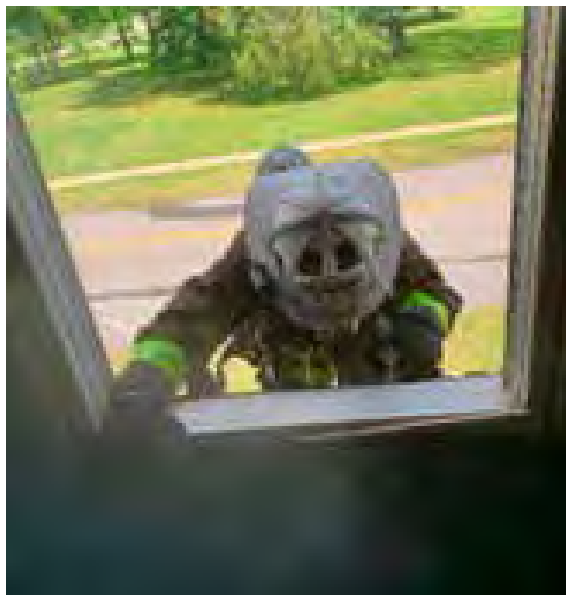
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# BALANCING PASSION AND PRIORITIES: A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Assistant Chief Samantha Green



Work-life balance - it's a term often preached, but not always practiced. As you read this article with my name under the title, you know I'm the last person to preach it. I'm the absolute worst at work-life balance, and it's particularly challenging when you're head over heels in love with your job. I'm a firefighter, and my passion for the fire service has been burning since I was just 14 years old.

I got lucky when I met my girlfriend, who later became my wife. She was the only person I'd ever met who not only supported my passion, but embraced it. She understood that the firehouse was there before her and would remain after her. We got married, and everything seemed to be in harmony.

Six years into our marriage, we decided to have a child, and our lives took an unexpected turn. That little monster came into this world with full force, instantly becoming my number one priority. This shift naturally pushed my wife down the list to number three, but she seemed okay with it as long as the monster was number one.

Our marriage had its share of highs and lows, as any relationship does. An old Captain of mine (now a Chief) once told me that marriage is the hardest thing a person will ever do, and he couldn't have been more right. But then, the COVID-19 pandemic came along and pushed our marriage into a stronger place. We had to spend more time together at home, doing simple things. It forced me to slow down because there were no training conferences or emergencies to run off to. Our relationship flourished during the pandemic.

As things began to open up again, I threw myself back into chasing my lifelong dream of becoming a training chief. I loved training and building others up; it was my passion. I also had a burning desire to break down walls and prove to my daughter that hard work pays off, and she could be anything she wanted to be.

Then, on June 9th, 2021, my wife called me six times while I was dealing with a trash truck fire. I knew something was terribly wrong because she never called so persistently. When I finally got to speak to her, she dropped the bombshell - her mammogram results were in,

and they were 99% sure she had cancer. My heart sank. She wasn't even 40; how could this be happening?

I rushed to be by her side, and the journey through cancer treatment began. As a firefighter with shift work, I understood the importance of having a sufficient leave balance, not only for instances like this, but also to prepare for the unspoken, the possibility of the worst happening.

I thought I was doing my best to balance work and life that year. I saved leave and was there for her during the critical moments. But here's where I faltered. None of us truly understands what it's like to fight a battle like cancer unless we're the ones going through it. I thought I knew what she needed, but I had no idea. I was there for the cancer stuff but not her, I provided no emotional support for her during this time.

I started taking classes and attending conferences when things eased up due to the pandemic, all while trying to balance my responsibilities at home. She told me it was fine, but it wasn't. I should've been there more, supporting her through this harrowing journey. I needed to prioritize my time and taskings, although the priority I chose was good for my career not so much my marriage.

I don't believe in regrets. I believe everything happens for a reason, and we learn from our experiences. That's why I'm writing this article for the month of January. I want others to understand the choices I made and, hopefully, help them make better ones in their future.

My wife resents me for not being there when she needed me most, for being so wrapped up in my passion that I couldn't see the forest through the trees. I'm here to say it's okay to love your job, to be dedicated and passionate, but ensure you're paying attention to the things that truly matter too. Learn from my mistakes, and if you're going through something similar, don't hesitate to reach out. I may not have all the answers, but I can tell you what not to do.

In the end, what really matters are the people we love, and it's never too late to strike a better balance between our passions and our priorities.



# REVOLUTIONIZING FIRE AND EMS RECRUITMENT: HARNESSING THE POWER OF SMARTPHONE VIDEO

Chuck Moran, Founder and Chief Instructor,  
Online Video Mastery, VFCA Partner



Are you struggling to attract qualified recruits? If your department is like so many these days, you're facing multiple challenges when it comes to attracting top talent. The job market's very fluid. It's competitive, and there just aren't enough skilled job applicants to go around.

To top it off, your department may well be learning what SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, discovered in a recent survey: 86 percent of recruiters and 62 percent of employers believe that the current job market is entirely candidate driven. So what does that mean?

It means that you need to show up in ways that matter to your job candidates. That sounds simple, right? But how do you do that? How do you connect in ways that matter to the candidates? Putting technical-sounding descriptions up on job boards and hoping for the best ... that's just not cutting it anymore, is it?

So what's the solution? Video.

As a marketer for well over 40 years, I have learned that there is nothing more powerful than video to tell a captivating and compelling story that brings results. Video is the number one most powerful way to connect because it gives potential staff or volunteers something really tangible that they all need: a virtual glimpse into what it's like to be a firefighter or paramedic. Makes sense, right?

Does this mean that you need to hire a professional crew and pay a thousand to three thousand dollars to create just one recruiting video? Nope. You can learn how to make them in-house whenever you need them.

Here at Online Video Mastery, we have an easy and effective technique that we call the World's Easiest Recruiting Video, and we offer it in the form of an online mini-course. Our short (under 30-minute) training provides a foolproof recipe for creating captivating recruiting videos in-house and on-demand using gear that everyone in your department already owns: their smartphones.

Marketers correctly preach that it's better to show than tell. Imagine having

the skills to highlight features like your departmental culture, diversity, perks, training exercises, examples of teamwork, facility, and equipment in short, targeted videos. In other words, imagine showing up in ways that matter to your job candidates. That's how you compete better and smarter, especially in this topsy-turvy market.

Is this skill hard to learn? Nope, and you only need three ingredients: your voiceover, (we provide the script template); the video footage (we tell you what to shoot); and you can add an optional music track if you like.

Then you put it all together in free editing software, and we have suggestions and instructions for you on that as well. Your videos can be completely customized, and once you've got the first one done, you'll know how to make all the rest of the recruiting – and other – videos that you need.

If you want to get a powerful solution to your recruitment challenges, here are a couple of options:

1) Attend the VFCA Fire Rescue Conference in February. I'll be teaching this technique on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 from 0800-0945 and again from 1000-1145. In addition to the core training, I'll include extras like how to use AI to generate your scripts.

2) Or, you can register for the training now at [www.videomastery.link/WERV23](http://www.videomastery.link/WERV23).

You can do this! Get trained so you can harness the power of smartphone video and attract the recruits that you need.

## UNCREWED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS UPDATE

Chief Charles Werner (Ret.), VFCA Technology Advisor & DRONERESPONDERS Director

Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS – drones) continue to be implemented by the fire service, law enforcement, emergency management, hazmat, SAR and EMS. DRONERESPONDERS estimates that there are over 5000 public safety agencies that have implemented drone programs. Additionally, there are over 50 public safety use cases identified.

In 2024, there are two new sets of rules that will be published by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding drones. First, the new rules that will address Beyond Visual Line of Sight are expected to be published in the first quarter. The importance of the BVLOS rules is that it impacts how far drones can be flown and will significantly impact public safety and drone deliveries. Second, the report of Detection and Mitigation will be released about the same time. This is the first step toward a FAA counter UAS strategy.

As a reminder, DRONERESPONDERS provides regular updates, provides the largest free Resource Center at DRONERESPONDERS.ORG. Membership is free.

In March 2024, DRONERESPONDERS will be holding its National Public Safety UAS Conference on March 12 & 13 at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/UASConf2024>.



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# WINTERGREEN FIRE & RESCUE CONSTRUCTS NEW FDC

Curtis N. Sheets, MPA  
Chief of Wintergreen Fire & Rescue



Wintergreen Fire Department has enjoyed a wonderful working relationship for many years with departments stretching from Lynchburg to Harrisonburg regarding the use of training facilities. For the past few years, the burn building of choice has been Buckingham County, which is 75 minutes from Station Two in Nellysford.

A few years ago, Wintergreen doubled down on training. A new position was created (Training Captain) to focus on training for our staff and volunteers. It was quickly noticed that our staff were spending as much time creating make-shift training props as they were training. Something needed to change.

The idea of a burn building specifically designed for our use was floated, however it did seem relatively impossible. There were two major problems. First, the master-plan community rules of Wintergreen don't allow a utilitarian building such as a burn building. Second, the cost of such a building would mandate the use of grant monies, which would likely force the building to be constructed in the central portion of Nelson County. (Lovingston) The drive from Wintergreen to Lovingston takes approximately 20 minutes, far too long to facilitate on-shift training. The project was investigated, and then essentially placed on the shelf.

A longtime supporter of Wintergreen Fire & Rescue aspired to make a legacy contribution. She wanted to do something more than purchase a vehicle which would be used for 20 years, and then forgotten. Ideally, she wanted to do something for the greater Nelson County community versus something which would only serve Wintergreen. This conversation led to what we now refer to as the FDC – Firefighter Development Center. We were able to purchase 5 acres adjacent to our Stoney Creek community on which a



two-story class-A burn building was constructed. The building also has all the required anchor points to teach various rope skills, etc. A reserve account for long-term maintenance was established to fund the replacement of thermal liners as needed. The total cost of the project was 1.75M, all of which was funded by a single donor.

This facility will allow Wintergreen to continue completing one firefighter academy annually, as well as facilitate a multitude of other training courses throughout the year. All training facilitated by Wintergreen is offered to Nelson County volunteer agencies as well. There are currently 34 full-time fire/rescue jobs in Nelson County. The FDC provides the tools we need to take a Nelson County High School senior and have them ready for full-time employment within a year of graduation. Eventually, the FDC will include a classroom structure, restrooms, and other training props.

The FDC is something which probably would never have been built in Nelson County if our donor hadn't raised her hand. The FDC likely has a useful life of 50+ years. The FDC will make every first responder and citizen in Nelson County safer. Also, the FDC provides needed tools to train young Nelson citizens in the skills needed to start a career capable of supporting a family. Our FDC truly is a "legacy gift" and we are eternally grateful.



**Key Facts:**

Architects – Elliott, LeBoeuf & McElwain

Lining System – High Temperature Linings – System 203

General Contractor – Harman Construction

The burn building has a total of 5 burn rooms, 4 on Division 1, 1 on Division 2. The building offers an FDC connection, a Temperature Management System, ventilation prop, and a roof-mounted rigging rack for rope operations.

**About Wintergreen Fire & Rescue:**

Wintergreen Fire & Rescue includes 34 full-time cross-trained staff that supports responses of both the Wintergreen Volunteer Fire Department and the Wintergreen Volunteer Rescue Squad. Including volunteers and part-time employees, the overall team numbers approximately 100. The agency responds to over 3,000 emergency calls annually from 3 staffed stations. Wintergreen’s coverage area includes the Blue Ridge Parkway, the James River, and everything in between. Wintergreen is the contract-EMS vendor for Nelson County as a part of an arrangement which began in 2006.

Wintergreen Fire & Rescue

WFR Facebook



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**June 23 – 28**

**University of Richmond**

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**EASE:** Easy to use and minimal training

**COST EFFECTIVENESS:** All these advantages at a cost not much higher than a standard response mountain bike

**TRAINING:** eBike certification training available

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>FRAME</b>	AL6061	<b>LCD DISPLAY</b>	Color, Smart LCD
<b>MOTOR</b>	1000 Watt Mid Drive	<b>COLOR OPTIONS</b>	Flat Dark Earth, Black, White
<b>BATTERY</b>	48V 14AH LG Lithium Ion	<b>SPEED</b>	*Up to 30 mph
<b>SHIFTER</b>	Shimano	<b>RANGE</b>	*Up to 50 miles (PA 1-3)
<b>WHEEL</b>	26"	*Varies based on weight, terrain and use of pedal assist	
<b>TIRES</b>	4" Kenda Puncture Resistant		
<b>CHARGER</b>	AC 100-240 V		
<b>FRONT FORK</b>	Front Suspension		
<b>BRAKES</b>	Hydraulic Disc		
<b>LIGHTS</b>	mPower Emergency Lights with Scene Lighting		

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# VFCF ANNOUNCES BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENTS FOR 2024



The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation will be holding three benefit golf tournaments around the Commonwealth in 2023. The proceeds from these events will be used to help support the continuance of the Virginia Fire Officers Academy and the Virginia Chief Officers Academy. In addition, scholarships are also supported for first responders and or their immediate family members.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Start Time</b>
<b>14th Annual VFCF /Spotsylvania –Lees Hill Golf Club</b> POC–Chris Eudailey–ceudailey@vfca.us or 540-809-9397	5-31-24	1100 Hours
<b>10th Annual VFCF /Williamsburg –JCC/Kiskiack</b> POC–Ryan Ashe–757-220-0626	9-13-24	0800 Hours
<b>9th Annual VFCF /Salem –Blacksburg Country Club</b> POC–John Prillaman–jprillaman@salemva.gov or 540-375-3080	10-7-24	0800 Hours

Additional information can also be found at [www.vfca.us](http://www.vfca.us). The VFCF is actively seeking sponsors and door prizes for each of these events. The goal for these three events for 2021 is \$50,000.



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New Fire Station 4 ( Lanexa )  
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New Fire Station 11 + 3-Story Training Tower  
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Please Contact: Matt H. Astrin, Principal | Director of Municipal & Public Safety Studio | [mastrin@rrmm.com](mailto:mastrin@rrmm.com) | 757.717.2788 | [www.RRMM.com](http://www.RRMM.com)  
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## Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation

P.O. Box 699, Blackstone, VA 23824



Phone: (888) 818-0983  
Web Site: [www.vfca.us](http://www.vfca.us)

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you today to share some information about the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation (VFCF). The VFCF was created and recorded with the State Corporation Commission as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in July 2007. The VFCF was born from the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association with the primary goal of providing educational opportunities, including scholarships and grants, to fire and emergency services professionals across the Commonwealth. Over 150 scholarships have been awarded to date to emergency responders or immediate family members. These scholarships have allowed these individuals to further their educational opportunities and better prepare themselves for future opportunities.

In addition, the Foundation is committed to developing the future leaders of the fire service in Virginia. This is being done through the delivery of a week-long resident program delivered at the University of Richmond. The theme of this program is Safety through Leadership and it focuses on improving leadership techniques, personal accountability and fostering the cultural change required to improve firefighter safety. Modules for this program include: the impact on the leader's attitude on safety, employee coaching techniques, conflict resolution, correcting unsafe behaviors, effective communication, and dealing with employee stress. Students participate in real life scenarios using actors and facilitators to guide the learning process. To date over 240 students have graduated from this program and it is our hope to continue to provide two sessions yearly.

I am writing you today to ask for your help. The Foundation has been hosting several fundraising events to help ensure our mission is maintained. The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation is holding a silent auction as part of the 2024 Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference being held in Virginia Beach, February 19 – 24, 2024. Will you consider donating something that can be included for the silent auction? I want to thank you for the opportunity to share this information about our organization. I hope you will agree this is a worthy cause and you will consider donating to help further the VFCF efforts. If you have any questions or if you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

R. Christian Eudailey  
President/CEO  
VFCF



# SILENT AUCTION DONATIONS NEEDED


The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA) and its Administrative Professionals Section (APS) are seeking donations for the annual silent auction. The auction will be held during the Virginia Fire Chiefs Conference, February 19-24, 2024.

All monies earned from the auction will benefit the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation (VFCF) in fulfilling educational scholarships for fire and ems personnel, and their families. All donations are tax deductible.

Donations can be anything you'd like - baskets with various items, theme baskets, gift cards, gently used items, etc. Donations do not need to be fire/ems service related. If possible, please wrap your donation in clear cellophane.

## For more information, or questions, please contact:

Melissa Heiderman  
President - APS

 (703) 257-8458

 [mheiderman@manassasva.gov](mailto:mheiderman@manassasva.gov)

Mandy Waybright

Vice President - APS

 (540) 432-7742

 [mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov](mailto:mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov)

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VIRGINIA FIRE  
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**Saturday, March 23, 2024**

*A Colonial Road Runners Grand Prix Event  
Colonial Williamsburg  
Duke of Gloucester Street*

*5th ANNUAL VFCF FIRE CHIEFS 5KRUN/WALK  
FUNDRAISER AND 1 MILE  
FUN RUN*

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundations (VFCF), purpose is to provide educational opportunities for the community including scholarships to fire and emergency services professionals as well as develop public relations programs to promote and raise public awareness of Virginia's fire and emergency services. The VFCF also assists other related organizations in the development and implementation of public education programs and provides grants to other fire and emergency service organizations. Funding for the VFCF is provided through personal donations, corporate giving and fundraising events.

Your gift is tax deductible.



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- Start at Bruton Parish Church, passing the historic Capitol Building and Governor's Palace
- Loop through the City of Williamsburg Municipal Center, past the Williamsburg Fire Station, before returning to Colonial Williamsburg.
- You'll finish on Duke of Gloucester Street.

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#### SCHEDULE

Packet Pick-  
Up/Registration:  
6:45 - 7:45 am

1 mile Fun Run: 7:30 am  
5k Run: 8:00 am  
Awards: 9:15 am

#### ENTRY FEES

Early Registration through  
February 29, 2024: \$30  
Late registration through  
March 21, 2024: \$35  
Race Day: \$40  
Fun Run: FREE  
Fun Run with shirt: \$8  
Youth Sizes: S, M, Lg`

#### AWARDS AGE GROUPS

Top 3 overall Male and  
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**Age groups:** 14 and  
under, 15-19, 20-24, 25-  
29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44,  
45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-  
64, 65-69, 70 & over

# LOUDOUN COUNTY HIGH THREAT TEAM CONDUCTS ACT OF VIOLENCE UNIFIED COMMAND TRAINING

Daniel Neal

The Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System (LC-CFRS) and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) trained for an act of violence incident (AVI) since 2013. With senior leadership support, the relationship between both agencies took a step closer in 2021 with the formal establishment of the "Loudoun County High Threat Team". The Loudoun County High Threat Team consists of members of LC-CFRS, LCSO, and Leesburg Police. The team meets monthly to discuss policy, coordination, and training together. The team even discusses incident successes and areas of improvement. The team's unofficial motto is "Trust and Relationships".

One of the Loudoun County High Threat Team's flagship initiatives is "AVI Unified Command Lab". Conducted quarterly, LCSO supervisors and LC-CFRS chief officers meet in the LC-CFRS Command Competency Lab. After a 45-minute lecture on AVI unified command operations, LCSO supervisors and LC-CFRS chief officers respond to simulated active shooter incidents. LCSO and LC-CFRS role-players radio response information to a simulated unified command post (aka "The Hot Seat"). LCSO supervisors must manage the initial law enforcement response to stop the assailant. Then, they request unified command with an LC-CFRS chief officer. The LC-CFRS chief officer enters the command post to form unified command. Together, the LCSO supervisor and LC-CFRS chief officer must quickly secure the scene and access the injured patients. After the simulation, facilitators debrief the commanders together.

Since the implementation of the AVI Unified Command Lab Trainings, over 150 active shooter incidents have been simulated. Many unanticipated benefits were reaped from this initiative. First, LCSO supervisors and LC-CFRS chief officers began to develop trust and relationships. Each began to know the other by name. Each agency began to learn about the other. Long-held stereotypes and generalizations disappeared. Second, unified command began to form on many incidents, including fires, motor vehicle collisions, and lost persons. One salient example occurred in March 2022. A wind-driven fire engulfed four homes in Ashburn, Virginia. Unified command was formed quickly demonstrated by the deputy fire chief and sergeant sitting side-by-side in the command vehicle. As the deputy fire chief managed a large fire attack, the sergeant began evacuating homes and attempting to account for any unaccounted occupants. Third, LCSO supervisors and LC-CFRS chief officers began to learn techniques to

effectively command and manage an AVI. This included the use of protected corridors and the rapid transition from stopping the assailant to casualty care.

The Loudoun County High Threat Team's AVI Unified Command Lab is instrumental in building trust and relationships between the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office. Although initially intended to improve readiness for an AVI, it proved to improve cooperation and response on every joint incident, regardless of size. The Loudoun County High Threat Team's AVI Unified Command Lab isn't going anywhere and has already scheduled their sessions for 2024.



Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and Loudoun County Fire and Rescue in unified command.



LCSO supervisor and LCCFRS company officer jointly manage the response to an AVI.

# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual

Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation  
Golf Tournament  
May 31, 2024  
"New Start Time"



## Lees Hill Golf Club

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All proceeds benefit the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation which provides educational opportunities to fire and emergency services professionals.

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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Golf Only \$ 100.00 Per Player</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Donation Only \$</b>	

### Make check payable to: VFCF

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Total Amount Enclosed: \$

### Tournament Information

Registration & Range Opens at: 9:00 AM	<b>Shotgun Start at: 11:00 AM</b>	Captains Choice
<b>Flight 1 (1<sup>st</sup>)Place Team \$400 Cash Prize</b>	Mulligans / Red Tee's	50/50 Raffle
<b>Flight 2 (1<sup>st</sup>)Place Team \$400 Cash Prize</b>	Putting Contest \$400.00 Cash Prize	Many Door Prizes

### Sponsor and Player Information:

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Phone:	Player 3: Email:
Email Address	Player 4: Email:

*The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation is a 501© 3 Organization – TIN 26-0694551*

Please send this form with your check for your sponsorship and/or players fees to:

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# COMMONWEALTH

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. - January 2024

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