

# COMMONWEALTH

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. - July 2024

*Chief*

## **VIRGINIA EXPERIENCES WORST WILDLAND FIRE SEASON IN MORE THAN 30 YEARS DURING 2023 AND IT'S STARTING AGAIN**



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# COMMONWEALTH

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. - July 2024

## Chief

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Cover Photo: The Waterfall Mountain Complex on the evening of Wednesday, March 20, 2024. (Image courtesy of Peter Forister Photography) (Peter Foister Photography)

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## INAUGURAL SMALL FIRE DEPARTMENT SUMMIT HELD

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SCAN ME



# YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT VIRGINIA DOESN'T HAVE A WUI PROBLEM, AND THAT WUI FIRES ONLY OCCUR IN WESTERN STATES, BUT 2023 SHOWED VIRGINIAN'S THE WORST SPRING/FALL WILDFIRE SEASONS IN MORE THAN 30 YEARS...2024 SEEMS TO BE STARTING THE SAME

Bill Smith

As you may recall, Virginia's spring wildfire season begins in mid-February and the 4 PM Burning Law is in effect from February 15th through April 30th each year. The fall wildfire season later runs from October 15th and goes through November.

Last year, at approximately 8:30 p.m. on March 9, 2023, a Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) firefighter battling a wildfire in western Virginia was killed when an ATV overturned, the state Department of Forestry announced.

Rocky S. Wood was killed while fighting a 15-acre wildfire along Lester's Fork Road near the Roseann community in Buchanan County that night, the department reported in a news release. Wood was scouting the area to determine where to create a containment line around the perimeter of the fire when the ATV he was riding overturned, said John Miller, a spokesperson for the Department of Forestry. The spring fire season continued to be busy until it ended in April.

Later that year, the '23 fall wildfire season hit hard and on November 21st, a statewide rain event finally brought an end to Virginia's worst fall wildfire season in more than 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 across 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. At one point during that fire, more than 20 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway had to be closed because of smoke and visibility issues. The DOF's largest wildfires of the 2023 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).

The 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.

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASING WUI FIRES

In their report **The Chemistry of Fires at the Wildland-Urban Interface** published in 2022, The U.S. Forest Service estimates that in 2010, more than 70,000 communities and **43.4 million homes** were at risk from WUI fires, a significant increase from the 30.8 million homes considered at risk in 1990 (Radeloff et al., 2018). In the past ten years, wildfires have destroyed tens of thousands of structures (USFS, n.d.).

Three main factors have driven the increase in WUI fires: (1) the expansion of areas at the WUI, (2) climate change, and (3) land management practices at the WUI.

### The Expanding WUI

In 2000, the WUI made up 465,614 km<sup>2</sup> of the continental United States, a 52 percent expansion from 1970. Researchers project that its geographic size will likely grow by more than 10 percent by 2030 (Theobald and Romme, 2007). While population growth in general has increased the number of people living in the WUI, stronger effects have come from the deconcentration of populations (e.g., moving to the suburbs and exurbs), population shifts to the American West and Southeast, and an increased interest in "natural amenities" such as living in woodland areas. This is expected to continue (Hammer et al., 2009; Marks, 2021). Some research suggests that the main drivers of the migration to the WUI are demographic trends, including "socioeconomic objectives (e.g., rising housing prices in urban areas, access to resources and amenities, aesthetics, and increased access to nature) and structural societal limits (e.g., zoning laws, growth incentives, and land use)" (Peterson et al., 2021).

Increased development at the WUI has also increased human contact with wildland areas (Radeloff et al., 2018). Human-started wildfires accounted for 84 percent of all wildfires in two decades (1992–2012) of government records (Balch et al., 2017), so increased development at the WUI has also increased the risk of accidental fires at the WUI.

Simultaneously, as WUI areas expand, fires that start in wildland areas are more likely to burn wildland vegetation near WUI developments (Radeloff et al., 2005). These fires therefore have a greater chance of igniting homes or other structures at the WUI. Increased human contact with the WUI, as well as increased wildfire contact with human development and suburban/urban structures, both due to the rapid expansion of new construction at the WUI, resulted in 44.9 percent of the WUI and 17.5 million people between 2000 and 2010 being at risk of a wildfire occurring (Thomas and Butry, 2014). Furthermore, WUI communities are more vulnerable to fire events because geographical barriers make it harder to suppress fires in the WUI (Peterson et al., 2021).

### Impacts of Climate Change

As the risk of wildfires coming into contact with communities at the WUI increases, so does the risk of wildfires igniting and spreading faster than humans can control them. Climate change has increased the frequency and length of droughts, particularly in the American West, which dry out soil and vegetation (USGCRP, 2018). This makes wildland vegetation more likely to ignite and to burn rapidly once ignited, reaching more communities at the expanded WUI (Peterson et al., 2021).

Based on climate projections, the risk of wildfires is projected to continue to increase in most areas of the world as climate change worsens (Bowman et al., 2020; Hurteau et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2019; Turco et al., 2018). While extreme drought conditions

are more prevalent in the American West, drier weather conditions across the United States pose a risk for wildfire spread in any climate. For example, the Chimney Tops 2 Fire in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and nearby Gatlinburg, Tennessee, occurred in 2016 when much of the southeastern United States had been under "exceptional drought," or extremely dry, conditions in the months before the fire.

While the short-term effects of climate change, like drought, directly increase fire risk, in the long term, the situation is more complex. Over years or decades, climate can affect factors like fuel buildup, with a drought in one year reducing the amount of fuel available the next. A recent study used a model to integrate ecohydrology, fire spread, and fire effects to simulate 60 years of vegetation, fuel development, and wildfire in an area in the southern Sierra Nevada, California. The study modeled increased temperature and drought, both with and without wildfire. In the short term, high temperature, low precipitation, and high fuel loading led to increased area burned, as expected. Zhong et al. (2021) model how land use and land cover changes will change local atmospheric conditions, including increasing land surface temperature and reducing precipitation, which will in turn lead to longer fire seasons and more extreme fire-weather conditions across the United States. As land use changes exacerbate wildfire risk, climate change and increasing development into the WUI exacerbate the conditions under which a wildfire can ignite and spread. This creates a feedback loop in which fires at the WUI become more likely, frequent, and dangerous.

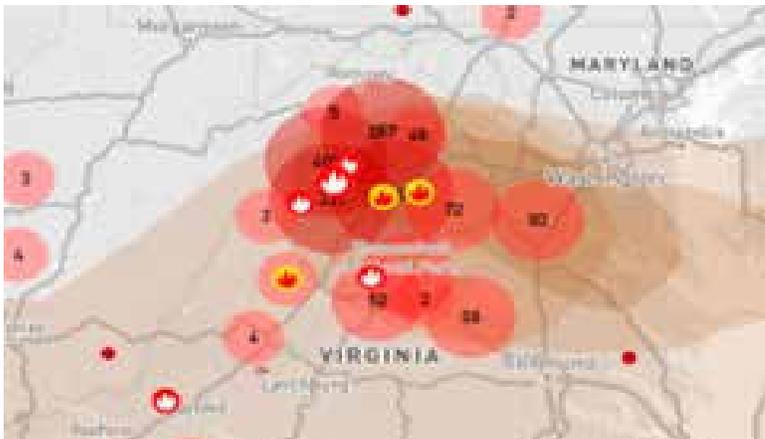
### Land Management at the WUI

Past wildland management practices has been recognized as an additional driver of increasing WUI fire threat. The wildland ecosystem in the western United States mostly evolved with wildfire disruption of the landscape (Hessburg, 2021). However, fire exclusion and suppression have been the emphasis of wildland fire management in the region in the past century (Calkin et al., 2015; Stephens and Ruth, 2005). This land management practice and past logging activities have contributed toward changes in forests in terms of vegetation age, structure, continuity, and density (Calkin et al., 2015; McIntyre et al., 2015; Schoennagel et al., 2017). Fire exclusion has resulted in fuel accumulation and wildlands that are less fire resistant, and evidence indicates that a transition has occurred from a regular, less intense surface fire regime to infrequent, large crown fires in the region (Calkin et al., 2015; Schoennagel et al., 2017). Ironically, the increase in assets at risk due to the growth of the WUI and sociopolitical pressures continues to compel the suppression response to wildfires (Calkin et al., 2015; Kolden, 2019), although there is a growing realization of the need to rectify current wildland management practices (Hessburg, 2021; Kolden, 2019; Schoennagel et al., 2017).

### 2024 isn't starting much better

As we begin the 2024 spring wildfire season, crews were battling scores of wildfires across Virginia on March 22nd, including a fire affecting hundreds of acres at Shenandoah National Park, amid an elevated fire risk, officials said.

**The map below shows fires burning in Virginia and West Virginia on March 21, 2024. @ USA TODAY via WFIGS, CIFFC, NOAA**



Before the rains came on March 23rd, there were more than 100 fires burning amid gusty winds and low relative humidity, affecting more than 2 1/2 square miles (6.47 square kilometers) across the state, many of them in the central part of the state, Virginia Department of Forestry spokesperson Cory Swift said by telephone.

Shenandoah County officials announced Thursday that five homes were lost due to a fire northwest of Strasburg, noting that the number may change as the area is assessed. Residents of homes that were not affected who evacuated may return, officials said in a news release. That fire and another large fire near Basye have been contained, and there are no known fatalities, officials said.

A fire that started on private land in the Luray area of Page County spread very quickly into Shenandoah National Park, reaching about 450 acres (182.11 hectares) by Thursday morning, park spokesperson Claire Comer said by telephone. The majority of the fire is inside the 200,000-acre (80,937-hectare) park and is about 10% contained, she said.

Smoke from a wildfire closed about 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) of Skyline Drive, the park announced Wednesday. Fire also closed sections of the Appalachian Trail and a fire ban was in effect for all of Shenandoah National Park.

Page County officials declared a state of emergency Wednesday evening as several communities were asked to evacuate and county schools were closed Thursday. In Page County, 10 homes were destroyed. One additional home received major damage while three others were labeled as being "affected" by the fires. Louisa County also declared a state of emergency and recommended evacuations in some communities, but by evening the fires were contained, officials said.

On 4/1, the Virginia Department of Forestry reported a Scott County part-time firefighter died while fighting a three-acre wildfire on Saturday, March 30. The Department of Forestry said firefighter James C. Ward collapsed while working on a hand crew fighting a wildfire on Garland Drive in Scott County. He was taken to Holston Valley Medical Center in Kingsport, TN where he did not recover. Ward was an experienced DOF part-time firefighter who had worked with the agency since 1998. He leaves behind his wife and a son. "It is with a heavy heart that we share such sad news on this Easter afternoon," said State Forester Rob Farrell. "Please keep James' loved ones and his firefighter family in your thoughts and prayers. And remember, everything you do to prevent wildfires helps protect our brave first responders."

In late May, DOF reported that a spring fire in Southwest Virginia was among the largest in the Commonwealth. The Department of Forestry responded to 411 Virginia wildfires during the spring fire season, which runs from Feb.15 to April 30. Combined, those fires burned almost 20,000 acres, the most in a spring fire season in the last 30 years, DOF reports. For reference, the department compared that to the 2,174 total acres burned in spring 2023 after 330 wildfires. A total of 29 homes and 28 structures were damaged in spring fires. Firefighters protected 750 homes and 400 structures while battling the wildfires. The Moore Hollow Fire in Lee County was the fifth-largest spring wildfire in Virginia. DOF reports it burned 525 acres.

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# 5TH ANNUAL VFCF/ WILLIAMSBURG 5K RUN/ WALK

Chris Eudailey

The 5th Annual VFCF/Williamsburg 5K Run/Walk was held on March 23, 2024 in Williamsburg. The weather was a bit of challenge, but it did not dampen the spirits of the participants. Going into the event there were about 142 registered participants and we had about 100 come out and brave the elements and complete the event. March in Virginia can be a bit of a challenge – since the inception of this event in 2019 the event has been challenged by COVID and storms, but we have persevered!!! The course was certified this year in advance of the event and there were several record finishers.

We had some great sponsors again this year to include the following:

Event Sponsor - L3 Harris

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The VFCF would like to give a big shout out to all the sponsors that supported this event and helped ensure its overall success! The event this year raised another \$10K that will be used to help provide scholarships and to financially support the VFOA and VCOA programs as needed. The VFCF would also like to thank the planning team members – Pat Dent, Donald Booth, Kevin Duck and Rick Platt. In addition, this event could not have been held without the generous donations from Earth Fare of fruit and water for the participants and the help of the Colonial Roadrunners Club.

The 6th Annual VFCF/Williamsburg 5K Run /Walk has been set for March 22, 2025. Please put this date on your calendar and check the VFCA website in early January 2025 to get registered!! I hope to see you there!



# MEET THE CHIEF



**Getting to know Kalvyn Smith.**  
*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 Kalvyn Smith, Chief of the Fauquier County Fire Rescue System.*

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

**KS:** I have been in the fire service both career and volunteer for a total of 46 years.

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

**KS:** I started in the fire service in 1978 at the age of 14 volunteering with the Catlett Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company, Virginia. At the age of 20, I joined the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue and retired in 2016. After a brief stint of helping my family on their dairy farm, I joined the Fauquier County Fire and Rescue Department in 2023 currently serving as Fire Chief.

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

**KS:** The Fauquier County government operates under the County Administrator form of government, as defined by Virginia law. The governing body responsible for making policies and overseeing the administration of the county is the Board of Supervisors. This board plays a crucial role in shaping the county's policies and ensuring effective governance.

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

**KS:** Fauquier County Board of Supervisors generate funding through a Fire Levy.

This funding ensures that essential services are available to the community, including firefighting, emergency medical response, and public safety. The Fire and Rescue Levy plays a crucial role in maintaining the safety and well-being of Fauquier County residents.

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

**KS:** The Fauquier County 2020 census indicates a population of 72,972.

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

**KS:** Fauquier County covers an area of approximately 651 square miles.

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

**KS:** Fauquier County Fire Rescue operates with 169 full-time firefighters and eight administrators across 11 stations countywide. We work a 24/48 shift

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

**KS:** Fire and Rescue is comprised of 27 Engines, 22 Ambulances, 9 Tankers, 1 Ladder, 3 Heavy Rescues, 4 Rescue Engines, Command Chief, EMS Supervisor.

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

**KS:** Incident summary for (2023)- EMS 7,556, FIRE 2,894, Total= 10,450

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

**KS:** We are a young department. The department has grown by 200% in the last 5 years. One of our biggest challenges is experience and ensuring that training and institutional knowledge is shared. The second challenge is remaining competitive with other Northern Virginia fire departments.

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

**KS:** I feel my management style is a servant leadership. I care immensely for our employees and I'm constantly listening to help me gauge the overall morale of the team as well as, dispelling the rumor mill. Safety for our team is #1 to include their mental and physical wellbeing. We strive to provide avenues to assist with these types of needs through our Fauquier County Employee Wellness Center. To remain agile with team needs, I am constantly open to new ideas and initiatives.

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

**KS:** Our long-range strategic plan is in the development stages

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

**KS:** Fauquier County Fire and Rescue has been very fortunate during these economic times. Our Board of Supervisors and County Administrator hold public safety in high regard. A recent testimony for this was the purchasing a 2023 E-One pumper and the hiring on 26 new employees along with a cola of 3% for all county employees. This type of support is critical for maintaining service delivery.

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

**KS:** The Fauquier County Fire Rescue System strives to be responsible for all its tax dollars by seeking federal grants to incentivize a volunteer workforce which makes up a large percentage of our system.

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

**KS:** One of the main challenges in today’s fire service is Technology and its associated costs. The fire service is inundated with technology from our Breathing Apparatus to our Atmospheric Monitoring Devices. These features all have critical roles in our service delivery. However, finding creative ways to sustain them can become difficult. Sustainability is crucial to avoid incorrect data from a certain type of instrument to a critical failure without any type of backup.

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

**KS:** I want a recruit with heart. One who walks with a purpose and carries themselves with professionalism. The recruit should speak politely and is accountable for his/her actions. A recruit should carry out the Departments values and missions. Be prepared at all times and if they are not early, they are late.

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

**KS:** Training is constant, it is preparedness, it is our lifeline to affective job skills. I believe training can be a conversation around the kitchen table or on the back-step of a rig. Training is a key to successful outcomes.

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

**KS:** Fauquier County has a great working relationship with all our surrounding jurisdictions to include mutual aid agreements that outlines our support at any given time. Having representation on regional working groups is key to idea exchange in order to enhance the overall service delivery for all parties.

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

**KS:** The future of the fire service depends on the current leaders. We need to set the standards and policies that will continue to pave the way for our followers. Making tough decisions and overcoming obstacles now by maintaining clear communications and expectations to our Administrators/ Executives and Board of Supervisors.

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

**KS:** The VFCA has contributed to me in many ways to include networking and research. There have been many occasions I’ve reached out to other members for information and/or recommendations. The fire service is primarily the same on the forefront therefore, in most cases the issue/s at hand have already had a remedy developed and tested.

# RESULTS OF FIRST 2 NIST STUDIES ON PFAS IN TURNOUT GEAR



The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) released the second part of a 4-part study to identify a firefighter’s relative risk of exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) released from their protective gear.

- Part 1: May 2023: “Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in New Firefighter Turnout Gear Textiles” (NIST Technical Note 2248) measured PFAS levels in new, off-the-shelf firefighter turnout gear, including jackets, pants, gloves, helmets and self-contained breathing apparatus.
  - o This study found that the amount of PFAS present varies widely between manufacturers and layers, but the highest PFAS concentrations were consistently observed in the outermost 2 layers of turnout coats and pants.
- Part 2: January 2024: “Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Firefighter Turnout Gear Textiles Exposed to Abrasion, Elevated Temperature, Laundering, or Weathering”(NIST Technical Note 2260) measured PFAS after the gear had been stressed in ways that mimic typical wear and tear while a firefighter is on duty.
  - o This follow-up study subjected these components of turnout gear to abrasion, heat, laundering and weathering. The results showed that abrasion, weathering and heat caused measured PFAS concentrations to increase. Laundering had little effect. In some cases, laundering reduced PFAS concentrations, presumably because PFAS were washed away into the wastewater.

**What are PFAS?**

PFAS are a category of manufactured chemicals used in turnout gear to enhance its safety and performance. These chemicals have thermal stability and increase the ability of textiles to resist oil and water.

**Why should firefighters care about PFAS?**

PFAS have been linked to cancer and other adverse health effects. Studies have shown that firefighters have higher levels of some types of PFAS in their blood due to their increased exposure to these substances when compared to the general population.

**Why is the National Institute of Standards and Technology studying PFAS?**

There are both risks and benefits to using PFAS in turnout gear, so NIST set out to measure the levels of specific types of PFAS in specific components of turnout gear, under a variety of conditions, in order to determine the actual exposure risks to firefighters.

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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 [virginiannaturalgas.com/integritymanagementplan](http://virginiannaturalgas.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.

[virginiannaturalgas.com/respondertraining](http://virginiannaturalgas.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](http://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](http://surveymonkey.com/r/FV2MQPB) to help us make sure we are keeping our communities safe.

# 10TH ANNUAL FIRE CHIEFS SUMMIT GREAT SUCCESS

Kevin Duck

Photos: Kevin Good

The Tenth Annual Virginia Fire Chiefs Association Summit was held May 16th and 17th in Glen Allen Virginia. Eighty Chiefs and/or Deputy Chiefs from across the Commonwealth attended this sold-out event. The attendees enjoyed a day and a half of education and networking all designed to assist them in providing better services to those they serve.

Attendees arrived to find the hotel undergoing some renovations. While this created some small challenges the Summit was held as planned. Day one kicked off with a very special visit from Governor Glen Youngkin. The Governor stopped by and after the presentation of colors by the Central Virginia Joint Honor Guard and pledge, he provided remarks on public service and working with each other for the betterment of all Virginia. He also discussed some of the legislative changes in the recent past to better assist those that have served in public safety. His support of the Fire/EMS service is evident and was appreciated by those in attendance.

Senator Emily Jordan came by after the Governor left. She was originally going to be a part of the legislative panel but had another commitment come up that prevented her from staying for that segment. She talked at length about her support of the public safety community and her desire to work with and support Fire/EMS in future legislative sessions regarding public safety legislation to help ensure a safer Commonwealth. She also took some questions from the attendees.

Following the Governor and Senator Jordan was a legislative update given by Devon Cabot and Maddy Busse from our legislative consultant, 2 Capitals Consulting. A discussion was held regarding the successes of the legislative session that just wrapped up. They discussed the budget that was just signed that week, as well as things we need to look at and keep on the radar. Devon then moderated a discussion with Delegate Mark Sickles of Alexandria and Delegate Alex Askew of Norfolk/VB. The Delegates discussed recent legislative changes as well as provided an insight on things they like to see when talking to constituents that help them make important decisions.

The VFCA was excited to have Chief John Butler from Fairfax with us. He was able to speak to the group about his duties and travels as current President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. He spends a lot of time on the road advocating for the fire service. Chief Butler advised he spends about three out of four weeks on the road, both in country and abroad. We are lucky to have Chief Butler at the helm of the IAFC and a fellow Virginia Fire Chief!

Lauren Opett from Va Dept. of Emergency Management, Brad Creasey of Va Dept. of Fire Programs and Rachel Stradling and Chris Lindsey from Va Dept. of Health attended and spoke at length about initiatives from their respective agencies. Lauren provided updates on programs, but more importantly the status of federal funding for the agency. VDEM is scheduled to receive the lowest funding level from their federal partners than in any year in the last ten years. This could have a devastating impact on services. Brad discussed ongoing initiatives within Fire Programs. From online testing to the hybrid truck operations course right up to the mandatory electric vehicle class, there is a lot on the front burner at Fire Programs. Everyone was very excited to hear from Rachel and Chris regarding the Office of EMS. It is good to know that with everything that has happened in the last year, the office is now in good hands. Processes are being put in place to



The VFCA 10th Annual Fire Chief's Summit opened with the Presentation of Colors by the Central Virginia Joint Honor Guard.



President Vance Cooper welcomes and makes remarks during the Opening Session.



Special thanks to Governor Glenn Youngkin for his remarks at the Opening Session of the sold out event.



Chief John Butler from Fairfax, current President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) speaks to attendees.

ensure the OEMS never get in this situation again. Bills have been paid and the grants will start again in the fall. It also seems we may see the educational grants offered again. We are looking forward to good things coming from both the investigations and the restructuring as the OEMS moves forward.

Thursday afternoon we had a great presentation on Human Performance & Resiliency provided by Captain John Carver and Master Firefighter Keith Laufhutte from Virginia Beach Fire Department. They talked at length about their program at the Beach where they have a three-part program designed to train those at three levels how to succeed as they move through the career process. They have a program for the recruits that helps with the stress of unknowns of a new recruit and assure that those that progress through the program can handle what is ahead. A similar program speaks to those that are moving to the Captain/MFF level and on to the Chief level.

Friday began with Robby Dawson, Southeastern Regional Director for the National Fire Protection Association stopping by to talk to the group about the components of the "Safety Ecosystem." He talked about all the different aspects of the Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem and how they play a part in the overall delivery of service. Parts of the system discussed were Code Compliance, Preparedness and Emergency Response, Skilled Workforce and Development and use of Current Codes. He also discussed the current code revision process, the consolidation projects and how to get involved in the process.

Finally, we closed out the session with a great presentation from Michael Barakey, Fire Chief of the City of Suffolk. Mike discussed at length parts of his book, Critical Decision Making: Point to Point Leadership. Different aspects discussed included topics pertaining to matters leadership is currently facing locally. From HR to legalization of marijuana and its impacts on the fire service, the discussion was robust and relevant to us all.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the support received from vendors to make this summit a success. Tracy Blankenship from First

Arriving joined us and sponsored our lunch Thursday. Thursday night, Will, Michael, Kevin and John from Atlantic Emergency Solutions joined us and sponsored our social. Words cannot express the appreciation we have for the support from First Arriving and Atlantic Emergency Solutions. Their support is what makes these events possible and a success!

We hope to see you at next year's Summit! Plans are already in the works! We may have some exciting changes coming. Stay tuned for more information to follow!



Devon Cabot and Maddy Busse from Two Capitols Consulting provide a 2024 Legislative Update on the Successes, Challenges and Opportunities for 2025.



VDEM Director of Strategic Communications and Senior Advisor Lauren Opett provided an update on happenings at VDEM



An open discussion with State Delegate Mark Sickles (D- Alexandria) and Delegate Alex Askew (D-Norfolk/VA Beach).



Suffolk Fire Chief Michael Barakey delivers presentation on "Critical Decision Making: Point to Point".



Second Vice-President Kevin Duck provides remarks, announcements and comments at the closing session.



Attendee's #VFCAFCSUMMIT2024



Drownings happen quickly and often they are silent. They are 100% preventable, but to prevent these tragedies, community members must follow simple water safety steps. Fire departments can play a key role in getting pool and swimming safety messages out to their communities.

**Messages to share**

- Adults need to stay with children when they are in or around water. DO NOT read, use a cell phone or leave children to go someplace else.
- For preschoolers, an adult should be close enough to touch the child.
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls and toys after you get out of the pool.
- Never swim near a boat, marina or boat launch.
- When boating, always use U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets (PFD)
- Install 4-sided fencing that separates the pool area from the home and yard. The fence should be at least 4-feet high. Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward.

## Fire Prevention Week to be observed...time to get ready

Fire Prevention Week is a nationally observed week in the United States and Canada from the Sunday to Saturday in which October 9 falls.

In the United States, the first Presidential Proclamation of the week was made in 1925 by Calvin Coolidge. Since then, the parent organization of the Fire Marshals Association of North America who first created the week, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), continues to be the international sponsor of it.

### Fire Prevention Week 2024 is October 6-12



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## 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION & A NEW BIENNIAL BUDGET

### Regular Session

On Saturday, March 9th, the Virginia General Assembly gaveled out “sine die” from the 2024 legislative session ending the 60 day “long session”, which includes the development of a biennial budget. There were 2,284 bills introduced in the General Assembly this session, with 1,046 passing both chambers. Of that total, 974 bills were sent to Governor Youngkin’s desk to be amended, vetoed, or signed into law. Several major pieces of legislation were taken up this year including an authority to finance the construction of a stadium/ entertainment district in Alexandria, the creation of an adult retail market for cannabis, legalization of skill games, and a slate of new tax proposals backed by the Governor in his introduced budget. The General Assembly adjourned with an adopted conference report for the budget. The Governor reviewed the budget sent to him by the legislature along with the hundreds of other bills that passed both chambers.

During the one day “Reconvened” or “Veto” session in April, the General Assembly reviewed the Governor’s vetoes and amendments to their legislation. Governor Youngkin vetoed a record-breaking 153 bills, while also offering amendments to approximately 117 pieces of legislation. Additionally, the Governor proposed 233 amendments to the budget conference report, essentially rewriting the legislature’s budget bill.

### Budget Deal

While there was a great deal of contention leading up to the Reconvened Session, Governor Glenn Youngkin, Speaker Don Scott, both Senate and House Finance Chairs, and the caucus leadership met that morning prior to the start of the floor session at which time they agreed to work towards a new budget deal over the next 30 days. While they did not act on the budget at all on Reconvened Session, they concluded the day with the General Assembly adopting a joint resolution to direct the Governor to convene a special session on May 13th for the purpose of considering new budget bills. Subsequently, Governor Youngkin and budget conferees were able to come to a consensus on a budget deal that was said to be “a win for citizens of the Commonwealth.” The biennial budget passed both houses with strong bipartisan votes – in the House on a vote of 94-6 and the Senate on a vote of 39-1.

The new biennial budget included a handful of initiatives that both sides of the aisle were supportive of including: a 3% raise each year for teachers, state employees, and state-supported local employees; an increase in state funding of K-12 schools by more than \$2 billion; and more than \$200 million to make higher education more affordable by tampering tuition increases. Additionally, the deal provided approximately \$145 million for the Washington Metropolitan Transit system, significant toll relief in Hampton Roads, and \$175 million for improvements to Interstate 81. Throughout negotiations, Virginia’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was a point of contention, but the General Assembly ultimately decided to keep the status quo and let ongoing legal action over Virginia’s participation in RGGI play itself out.

### Fire & EMS Funding Priorities

The largest priority the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association championed was a legislative pathway to “Secure Dedicated and Sustainable State Funding for High-Quality Fire and EMS Response Services Across the Commonwealth”. A stakeholder workgroup conducted a study last year (resulting from HB 2175 in 2022) surveyed localities and produced a final report that documented staffing shortages and the high cost of equipment and apparatus. Unfortunately, this report came out very late in the fall, making it difficult to build consensus around any one recommendation. Ultimately, it was decided by the Fire and EMS stakeholders that we would pursue a new grant program modeled similarly to the federal SAFER grants, and ask for \$25M each year for heavy apparatus as well as recruitment and retention programs. Two pieces of legislation were filed at the request of the VFCA. Delegate Mark Sickles (D - Fairfax) and Senator Russett Perry (D - Loudoun) filed bills to create the grant program.

While a wider awareness of the needs of the fire and EMS services emerged this year, as was evident by the multiple bills in both chambers proposing different solutions, ultimately, the General Assembly did not act this year. Leadership and money committee staff agreed they wanted more information before moving forward. Therefore, the newly adopted budget includes \$150,000 starting July 1st for the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to hire a third-party consultant to review funding sufficiency in fire and EMS. This review and assessment shall include, but is not limited to:

*(i) identification of local, state, and federal funding provided to support local fire and emergency medical services by locality or region, and to the extent possible, trends in funding by source*

*(ii) consideration of identifiable fire or emergency medical service funding needs by locality or region*

*(iii) identification of factors that influence or differentiate the ability of localities or regions to meet the funding needs of local and regional fire and emergency medical services*

*(iv) factors influencing the ability of localities or regions to meet fire and emergency medical services funding needs*

*(v) consideration of the costs and benefits of consolidation state-level administration of fire and emergency medical services funding and oversight, to include an assessment of administrative models used in other states.*

Additionally, the funding shortfall and subsequent audit at the Office of EMS were also discussed, and a short-term fix was enacted by transferring \$12.5M from the general fund to the office of OEMS for the first year of the budget only. This \$12M figure represents the total collected from the \$2.00 increase to the "Four for Life" fee on vehicle registrations. That increase has been diverted to the general fund since it was passed in 2011.



### **2024 Lobby Day**

During the legislative session, on January 18, members of the VFCA participated in Lobby Day held in conjunction with the Virginia Professional Fire Fighters (VPPFF). The morning kicked off with a breakfast reception at a local hotel in downtown Richmond prior to the start of the relay race of legislator meetings. There were approximately 30 legislator visits scheduled and 30 people from the VFCA participating in lobby day. While there were specific meetings scheduled for the day, plenty of Fire Chiefs in attendance had the availability to drop by a number of other offices that were supplemental to the

schedule. This provided ample opportunity to advocate for our specific funding priority along with the larger fire and EMS priorities amongst the stakeholder groups. Following legislator visits, the chiefs split into two groups with one going to the House chamber gallery and one going to the Senate chamber gallery to receive floor introduction from Delegate Mark Sickles and Senator Angelia Williams Graves. Lunch was provided back at the hotel following the introductions in the gallery, and the evening concluded with a legislative reception at a local restaurant in which legislators and members of the VFCA and the VPPFF were in attendance throughout the night. Lobby Day is a unique opportunity for the Association to be visible, in uniform, and speak directly to those that have the power to make substantial policy changes for our future. If you are looking to participate in 2025 Lobby Day, please let the VFCA leadership or your legislative committee members know.



Above photos: VFCA members working for the betterment of the citizens of Virginia and the VFCA.

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



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# HISTORIC FIRES SERIES:

## TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST, MARCH 25, 1911

### An event that every firefighter and fire officer in the service should know about

March's historic fire is the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire which occurred on March 25, 1911 in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan. A year later, the FDNY Bureau of Fire Prevention was stood up and hit the streets of the 5 Boroughs of NYC. This fire was a turning point in fire and life safety for the entire nation and set codes and standards in motion. There is a ceremony each year on March 25 on the corner of Green Street and Washington Place. Ladder Co. 20 raises their aerial ladder to the 6th floor to denote the maximum reach at that time. The fire was on 8, 9, and 10.



This month's (April) fire occurred at the Rhythm Club on April 23, 1940 that killed 209 people and injured 100. Two years later, a fire occurred under similar conditions at the Coconut Grove Night Club in Boston, trapping and killing 492 people. Combustible interior decorations and doors that opened inward contributed to the loss. The word of the Natchez fire never left the small black community, therefore there were no lessons learned or warnings for the people of Boston.

Please feel free to share.

Thanks Chief Matt Tobia for sharing Chief Ron Kanterman lessons.

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## Electric Vehicle/Lithium-Ion Battery Training is **LIVE**

House Bill 2451 directed the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to develop training regarding electric vehicle fires and mandated every person engaged in firefighting activities (starting July 1, 2024), including volunteer firefighters, to complete the training program by **December 1, 2025**.

As it is a legislative mandate, the Electric Vehicle and Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Safety Awareness Online course will need to be **completed individually** on Cornerstone OnDemand. This training will be the only accepted training for this mandate.

### **Through a series of interactive modules, firefighters will:**

- ✔ Learn about the importance of electric vehicle fire safety
- ✔ Gain a comprehensive understanding of lithium-ion batteries and thermal runaway
- ✔ Learn about the protentional fire and safety hazards associated with electronic vehicles (including safe
- ✔ Incident response/management
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<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		
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# 2024 NATIONAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DINNER & SYMPOSIUM



Bill Smith

## “Delivering a United Message”

Since 1989, fire service leaders from across the nation have traveled to Washington, DC to attend CFSI’s National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner and Seminars Program.

Each year the Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) has the distinct honor of hosting the annual National Fire and Emergency Services Symposium and Dinner. On April 28-30, 2024, approximately 1,500 fire service leaders from across the nation gathered to interact with peers and share their expertise with federal leaders on the readiness and response capabilities of our nation’s first responders.

The National Fire and Emergency Services Symposium and Dinner is an event like no other in the fire and emergency services. It was an opportunity to develop a better understanding about the federal government’s role in addressing the challenges and concerns of our firefighters, emergency services personnel and the fire service industry. Opportunities abound to interact with members of Congress and federal agency officials to discuss both national issues and local concerns. The knowledge acquired provides an increased understanding of federal programs and legislation, while emboldening one to take a stronger interest in advocating for fire and emergency services on Capitol Hill.

Featuring federal policy makers and national fire service leaders, the program covers a broad array of national issues – issues being considered by Congress and implemented by federal agencies, as well as issues being addressed collectively by national organizations and distinguished fire service officials.

On Monday evening of the event, the 34th Annual National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner featured leaders of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus and the Administration who paid their personal tributes to the men and women of the fire and emergency services. The program also included several award presentations for individual and organizational leadership in advancing the readiness and response capabilities of our nation’s fire and emergency services.

As in the past, the VFCA has representatives at the function to help them gain a better understanding of how we can help to obtain support for the Virginia Fire Service. Included were: President Vance Cooper, Past Presidents Allen Baldwin, Keith Johnson, Jay Cullinan and Scott Garber, 1st VP Kevin Good, BOD Members Marci Stone, J. R. Hall and Todd Lupton and Women of Fire & EMS President Samantha Green.

The VFCA Board members participated in various educational seminars, held an onsite meeting, and networked with colleagues.



L to R: Immediate Past President Allen Baldwin, 1st VP Kevin Good, Board Member Marci Stone, Women of Fire & EMS President Samantha Green and President Vance Cooper.  
Photo: Kevin Good

## VFCA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### July

16	Executive Officers Meeting 1000 Hours	Virtual
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### August

1	Sound the Alarm Summit 0800 Hours	Chesterfield
20	VFCA Full Board Meeting 1000 Hours	VDFP

### September

13	10th VFCA/JCC Golf Tournament Kiskiack Golf Club 0800 Hours	Williamsburg
17	Executive Officers Meeting 1000 Hours	Virtual
19-20	Administrative Professionals Retreat 0800 Hours	Harrisonburg

### October

2-4	VFCA Annual Retreat/BOD Meeting 0900 Hours	Harrisonburg
7	9th Annual VFCA Golf Tournament 0800 Hours	Blacksburg
28	Federal/Military Summit 0800 Hours	TBD



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**1000 GALLON PUMPER**

Job# 41727



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JOB# 40801



**FREIGHTLINER M2-106 CHASSIS | SEATS FIVE  
1250 GPM | 152" BODY | 360HP CUMMINS**

**1000 GALLON PUMPER**

JOB# 40309



**FREIGHTLINER M2-106 CHASSIS | SEATS TWO  
1250 GPM | 152" BODY | 360HP CUMMINS**

# FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS AND EMS MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS HELD JUNE 1, 2024

This year's 26th annual Virginia Fallen Firefighters & Emergency Medical Services Memorial Service honored 17 fallen fire and EMS personnel who have been recognized in the Virginia Line of Duty Act in 2023 for their bravery and dedication to the citizens of the Commonwealth. The memorial service was open to the public.

## 2024 Honorees

- Larry W. Akers - Longshop-McCoy Fire and Rescue
- James M. Alexander Jr. - Hanover County Fire-EMS
- James E. Brewster - D.A.D Volunteer Fire Department
- Ernest N. Cash - Monelison Volunteer Fire Department
- Matthew R. Chiaverotti - Virginia Beach Fire Department
- Cameron B. Craig - Abingdon Fire Department
- Mia Ethridge - Louisa County Fire and EMS
- James A. Foster - Rice Volunteer Fire Department
- Brian R. Hricik - Alexandria Fire Department
- Helen "Gracey" C. Humbert - Botetourt County Fire and EMS
- Chester T. Lauck - Round Hill Community Volunteer Fire and Rescue - Frederick County
- William A. McFarland - Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services
- Gregory C. Meinel - Vinton First Aid Crew
- Alicia A. Monahan - Chesterfield County Fire and EMS
- Rory "Bud" C. Swanson - Lower King and Queen Volunteer Fire Department
- Stephen D. Whitson - Henrico County Division of Fire
- Rocky S. Wood - Virginia Department of Forestry

The memorial service began at noon on Saturday, June 1 at the Richmond International Raceway, Main Exhibition Hall. The service was streamed live for those who could not attend in person. Visit [www.vafire.com](http://www.vafire.com) for more information

The Memorial Service included a keynote address, a Virginia Fire Services Honor Guard procession, a musical performance, and a fire and EMS apparatus display from departments throughout the Commonwealth. State flags will be presented to the families of the fallen.



Photo: WTVR

# VIRGINIA STATEWIDE CANCER SURVEY

Steve Weissman, VA Firefighter Cancer Support Network



Did you know that occupational cancer is the leading cause of firefighter line of duty deaths? According to the CDC, firefighters have a 9% higher rate of a cancer diagnosis and a 14% higher mortality rate than the general population of the United States.

The Virginia Firefighters for Lifelong Health (VA-FLH) was established to study and generate data to identify cancer prevention strategies among Virginia Firefighters. The VA-FLH is a cohort and collaboration between the Virginia Chapter of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, the Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center and Richmond Firefighters IAFF Local 995. It is supported by the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and the Virginia Professional Firefighters.

To advance our goal to gather data, the VA-FLH has established an online cancer registry. We need your participation in the survey and are asking every Virginia firefighter to visit our website, log into it and complete the survey. From the data we collect, we aim to develop targeted and tailored cancer prevention health communication materials, state-wide strategic cancer prevention planning and accelerated cancer education and prevention.

Please visit our website at: [www.firefightersforhealth.org](http://www.firefightersforhealth.org) or scan the QR code:



For additional information email us at: [valfh@vcuhealth.org](mailto:valfh@vcuhealth.org) or 804.628.4649

# 14TH ANNUAL VFCF SPOTSYLVANIA GOLF TOURNAMENT A HUGE SUCCESS

R. Christian Eudailey

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation hosted the 14th Annual Golf Tournament at Lees Hill Golf Club on May 31, 2024. This year's event attracted 115 registered golfers with 111 in attendance. The top two teams of the tournament this year were as follows: 1st Place Flight A team included Jerry Brown, Sidney Jenkins, Eddie Bailey and Larry Nicholson and 1st Place in Flight B team consisted of Gery Morrison, David Conrad, Bobby Wright and Jeff Sargent. The winner of the longest drive was Sidney Jenkins and the winner of the closest to the pin was Rebecca English. The winner of the putting contest was Bill Shattuck.

The level of support this year from the sponsors and donors was TREMENDOUS! The VFCF BOT would like to publicly acknowledge the following the following Sponsors:

## **Diamond Title Sponsors**

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Dick Singer  
Atlantic Emergency Solutions  
AT&T  
BREG Environmental  
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## **Silver Title Sponsor**

Fraternal Order of Eagles Fredericksburg Aerie #4123

## **Bronze Title Sponsors**

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## **Gold Sponsors**

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The Baldwin Family

## **Donations**

FUJIFILM Wako Chemicals USA Corporation  
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Kirk Pickernel  
Darley Company  
Coca-Cola Bottling Company  
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Chesterfield Insurers

Between the generous sponsors, donors and the golfers that participated, the VFCF raised just over \$40K that will be used to help support the Robert E. White Scholarship Program as well as the Virginia Fire Officers Academy and the Virginia Chief Officers Academy. To date, the scholarship program has awarded 400 scholarships that total just over \$365K.

I would like to publicly thank the planning team that consisted of Dick Singer, Deuce Jewell, Charles Sterne and Steve Cooper. Planning for this event started in December 2023. The planning team met multiple times in advance of the event to provide updates and this along with brainstorming that took place help ensure a successful tournament. I also want to acknowledge the tremendous support provided by members of the Administrative Professionals Section – their hard work and support allowed the attendees to get checked in efficiently and the whole process was very smooth!!!

On behalf of the VFCF BOT I want to say a huge THANK YOU to all the generous sponsors and donors for your support and for the golfers that continue to show up and ensure that the VFCF has another successful event! The 15th Annual VFCF/ Spotsylvania Tournament is scheduled for June 13, 2025 – hope to see you there!



# VDEM ENCOURAGES HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

The official start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season is June 1 and NOAA has predicted an 85% chance of seeing above-normal activity. VDEM officials want to let residents and visitors to the commonwealth recognize the importance of planning how to respond to the threat of a severe storm or hurricane.

Here are some important tips to pass along to ensure everyone's safety before, during, and after severe weather.

## Make a plan:

- If you need to evacuate, you can move faster if you've already thought about what to do.
- Determine in advance where you'll go and your evacuation route(s).
- Know how you'll communicate and reconnect if your family isn't together when a storm hits.

## Make a kit:

- Have emergency food, water, and other supplies to last at least 72 hours.
- A good time to build your kit is when there isn't an imminent threat.
- Take the needs of individual family members, like seniors, babies, and pets, into consideration.
- A list of suggested items can be found at [/attachments/emergency-kit/](#)

## Prepare your home:

- Before a hurricane, you'll need to prepare your home by cleaning out drains and gutters, checking the yard, and removing or securing anything that could become a projectile, like bicycles, planters, grills, and lawn furniture.
- Cover doors and windows.
- Check your carbon monoxide (CO) detector's battery.
- For these and other tips, visit [vaemergency.gov/threats/hurricanes/](#)

## Purchase or renew flood insurance:

- It typically takes up to 30 days for a flood insurance policy to go into effect, so it's better not to wait until a storm is imminent.
- Shop for private insurance or seek coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Make sure insurance coverage reflects current home values.
- People often don't realize until it's too late that separate policies are needed for protection against wind and flood damage because a regular homeowners insurance policy doesn't cover them.

## Know your evacuation zone:

- The Virginia Department of Emergency Management designed evacuation zones for all coastal regions to simplify the process of determining whether a resident should evacuate or shelter at home in an emergency based on their address. Look up evacuation zones at [knowyourzoneva.org](#).

## Stay informed:

- Sign up for emergency alerts from your local office of emergency management and know where to get the latest information.

For more information, go to our website at [www.vaemergency.gov](#)



## VIRGINIA CELEBRATES NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK



Governor Glenn Youngkin visits Chesterfield County's PSAP to discuss critical issues facing our 9-1-1 centers and to thank the on-duty staff for their dedication and hard work to keep public safety workers and the citizens of Virginia safe.

National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW), observed every second week in April, has been set aside to recognize and celebrate the work of telecommunicators who are the first and most critical link between the public and emergency services. In 2023, emergency communications professionals answered approximately 4,500,000 9-1-1 calls in Virginia, often providing life-saving instructions to callers before responding units arrive on-scene.

Public safety telecommunicators work tirelessly to help keep our communities safe. VDEM recently had the opportunity to provide staffing recognition grants to help retain and recruit our emergency communication professionals statewide. We also had recognition of Virginia's public safety telecommunicators this year from Governor Glenn Youngkin, and we had an opportunity to visit Chesterfield

County's PSAP to discuss critical issues facing our 9-1-1 centers and to thank the on-duty staff. I truly appreciated his memorable and engaging visit with Chesterfield's ECC team.

On behalf of VDEM and the 9-1-1 and Geospatial (NGS) team we would like to thank all the emergency communications professionals in the Commonwealth for keeping watch over their communities 24/7, and for making a difference in people's lives every day!

## STAFFORD COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE AND VDEM PARTNER FOR SWIFT WATER RESPONSE



On May 2, VDEM and Stafford County Fire and Rescue held a ceremonial signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) recognizing the department's water rescue team into the fold of state-recognized type 3 swift & flood water response teams



# Save the Date

2024  
Virginia Fire Chiefs Association  
Administrative Professionals  
Retreat



September 19 & 20, 2024  
Harrisonburg, VA

*Details will be sent out no  
later than August 1, 2024*

*For More Information Contact:  
Mandy Waybright  
Harrisonburg Fire Department  
[mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov](mailto:mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov)  
540-432-7703 office  
540-481-0670 cell*





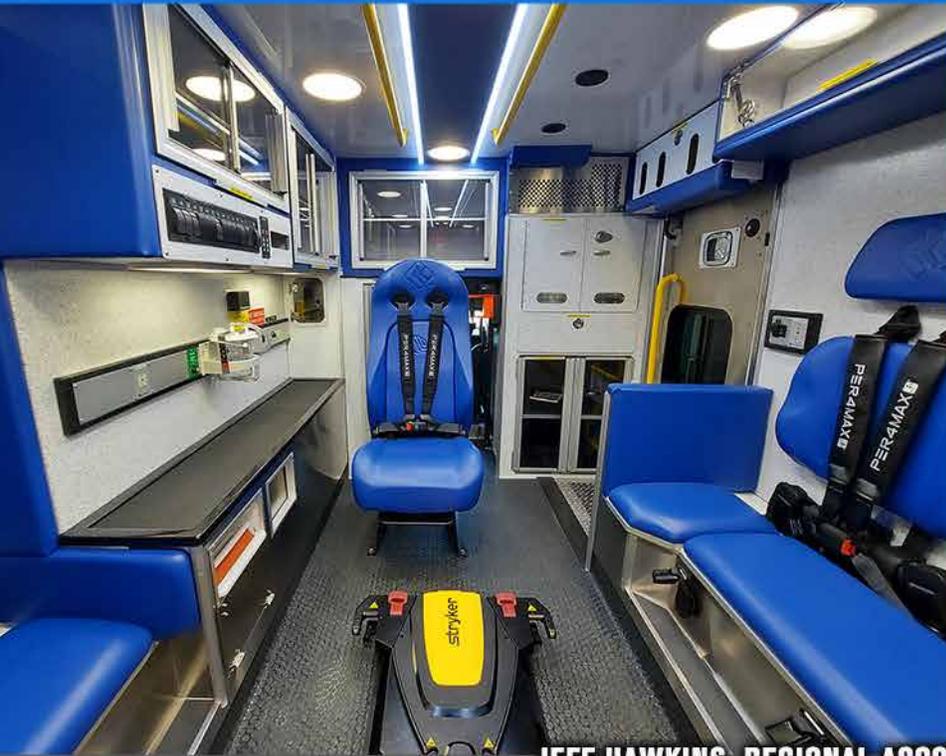
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# THOUSANDS GATHER FOR THE 43RD NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL SERVICE EVENTS HELD MAY 4-5, 2024 TO HONOR 226

Bill Smith

The number of firefighters recognized for giving the ultimate sacrifice is one of the largest ever.

The 43rd National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend event honoring 226 fallen firefighters was held Sunday, May 5th in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The event was hosted by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Unfortunately because of inclement weather, all events had to be moved inside to nearby Mount St. Mary's University as inclement weather is possible.

The candlelight vigil and the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service will be held indoors as the area was expecting to receive heavy rain during that time period.

Even though the backdrop will be different, a dignified ceremony will be held to honor 226 fallen firefighters.

"It was a tough decision. But, it was the right one for the families especially with the amount of rain that was predicted," said Victor Stagnaro, Chief Executive Officer of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

Among the guests are more than 1,200 family members who will have the opportunity to visit the memorial.

Some of the personnel who were recognized for giving the ultimate sacrifice include those who perished during or after incidents, firefighters killed in vehicle crashes as well as those stricken by illnesses such as heart attacks, strokes, cancer and COVID.

Of the 226 that died in 2023, 11 of them were from Virginia. They included:

- Ernest N. "Ernie" Cash,  
Monelison Volunteer Fire Department
- Matthew R. Chiaverotti,  
Virginia Beach Fire Department
- Cameron B Craig,  
Abingdon Fire Department
- Mia Ethridge,  
Louisa County Department of Fire & EMS
- Brian R. Hricik,  
Alexandria Fire Department
- John Laronda,  
Altavista Volunteer Fire Department
- Chester. T. Lauck,  
Frederick County Fire & Rescue

- Ian Thomas Strickler,  
Frederick County Fire & Rescue
- John E. Tucker,  
Altavista Volunteer Fire Department
- Stephen D. Whitson,  
Henrico County Division of Fire
- Rocky S. Wood,  
Virginia Department of Forestry

That weekend bells tolled across the Nation for those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice. The sound of a bell holds special significance for firefighters.



Long before there were telephones and radios in use in America, fire departments utilized the telegraph to receive fire alarms. The toll of a bell summoned members to the station, signaled the beginning of a shift, notified departments of a call for help, and indicated a call was completed and the unit had returned to the station. When a firefighter died in the line of duty, the Fire Alarm Office, the forerunner of today's computerized Fire Communications Centers, would "tap out" a special signal, "Five-Five-Five" over the telegraph fire alarm circuits which went to all station houses. Done for the purpose of notification, and as a sign of honor and respect, such symbolism has been a long-honored fire service tradition which still continues in some cities today.



What an Awesome team of Chiefs from all across America, who helped bring closure to Families who lost a Love One in the Line of Duty at the Fallen FF Memorial Service.

# EXCEPTIONAL, AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: BEING GENUINE IS HARDER THAN IT SOUNDS. MY JOURNEY TO CHANGE FIRE SERVICE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Kerry Henderson. Battalion Chief, James City County Fire Department

If you have been in the fire service any length of time you have probably taken some of the obligatory officer and leadership classes. You will likely agree that these classes are taught by firefighters and fire officers of a wide variety of teaching ability. Some of these classes may be required for promotion or may serve to check a box for a career ladder advancement. Believe me, there are some great fire service leadership classes out there and I encourage you to seek those out.

My fear is that too many in the fire service take only the required, check the box promotion classes. It was this very reason that I started researching, writing and teaching about what else is out there on the leadership frontier. My goal became to encourage firefighters to think outside of the traditional, fire service leadership box, and to start to seek out what will personally improve your own ability to influence and mentor others in a positive way.



My journey started in 2022 with the W.S. Darley Fire Service Leadership Essay Contest. The topic that year was near and dear to my heart; write about “What Makes for an Exceptional Company Officer”. The company officer is the backbone to every fire department in the country. The exceptional company officer drives an organization’s culture; he/she mentors, leads, trains and guides over 90% of the men and women of the fire service. They must be the best of the best.

Traditionally those company officers take some required state classes and maybe a few

department- mandated management classes and off they go. But what they really need is individualized personal development, the soft skills of leadership. They must know themselves inside and out before leading others. So in 2022 I wrote an article titled “Exceptional, Authentic Leadership: Being Genuine is Harder Than it Sounds” and submitted it to the Darley Leadership Essay contest. Side note, this year’s essay contest is now open. Do you have ideas on fire service leadership of the future? If so, visit <https://www.darley.com/essay-competition/> to enter!

To my amazement my essay won the top prize. I was stoked about the cash prize and cool swag they mailed my way. But what came next was truly life changing. I was offered a spot to speak at the Texas A&M, TEEX Fire Service Leadership and Development Symposium. The second-place winner was also offered a spot. We both eagerly agreed. We soon learned that there was in fact just one speaking spot open, and we needed to decide who would attend. And that is how Lieutenant Kyle Matousek and I first met.

We read each other’s articles and realized our messages went hand in hand. We pitched, having never met in person, that we would speak together in Texas that January. TEEX was hesitant, and rightfully so. However, they agreed and for the next few months Kyle and I met over zoom to sort out how this presentation would go. We met, for the first time in person, in January 2023, just one day before we were scheduled to present. That first-class set-in motion a whirlwind of speaking engagements, a podcast, more articles, and interviews than I could have ever predicted.

Kyle and I founded HM Leadership Concepts and have spoken twice for TEEX, which will always have a special place in my heart. If you ever have the chance to attend a TEEX symposium I promise you will not regret it. We have also spoken at the Virginia Fire Rescue Conference in 2023 and 2024. The first year we spoke at the VFRC we were invited by Chief Sam Green of Fort Belvoir and spoke for the Federal Military Section Day, which was quite an honor. In 2023 we also spoke at the Illinois Fire Chiefs Conference in Peoria Illinois.



In October of 2024 Kyle and I launched “The Heat of Command: Mastering the Art of Fire Service Leadership” podcast on Apple, Spotify and YouTube. The podcast grew slowly, but after a live taping at the Virginia Fire Rescue Conference in the middle of the exhibit hall (thanks Chief Carter from VBFD) the podcast started to take off. We have since recorded live shows from TEEX, the Fire Service Women of Illinois Symposium, and at FDIC this year.

Sharing our message around the Country has been so incredibly fulfilling. I was blessed with the opportunity to speak at FDIC this year, talk about nervous! But what I found was the men and women of the fire service, no matter what conference, area of the country or world, or the size of the department they come from all have so much in common. They all want to learn new ways to grow in their leadership capabilities. They don't want to listen to an instructor tell them what not to do or give them generalized leadership concepts that they can't dial in to their own style.

Our class and podcasts aim to show that the people we meet in life that have the courage and confidence to be who they are without apologizing, the people who are not afraid to admit their weaknesses and the people who are willing to be vulnerable are the people who make the best leaders. Not only are they great leaders to work for, but they are also great people to be friends with and to work alongside.

I've heard others say that doing the personal work to improve your authenticity and your empathy, and focusing on the feelings of our employees is soft and is geared towards a generation that needs a safe space. I've also been asked "what does any of this work do to put out fires"? To try and respond to this in a compassionate, empathetic way, I have to say that this type of thinking and this type of leadership is outdated. Our firefighters need us to be better and knowing ourselves inside and out is the first step to exceptional leadership. I much prefer a leader that knows themselves well enough to be comfortable being themselves and has a leadership style that fits them. We gravitate to leaders that are authentic because it feels real, and it helps us feel ok to be our own true self.



Kerry Henderson is a 23-year fire service veteran and a battalion chief for James City County (VA) Fire Department. She is an award-winning writer and in 2022 co-founded H&M Leadership Concepts to share her message about leadership of the future.

## MANDATORY ONLINE ELECTRIC VEHICLE LITHIUM-ION BATTERY TRAINING IN DEVELOPMENT

House Bill 2451 directed the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to develop training regarding electric vehicle fires and mandated every person engaged in firefighting activities, including volunteer firefighters, to complete the training program by December 1, 2025.

The Electric Vehicle and Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Safety Awareness course will be an online course and will need to be completed individually so it appears on your transcript in Cornerstone OnDemand.

This course will be released later this year.



## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES TO SAVE FIRE AND SAFER GRANTS

### HOUSE APPROVAL SENDS S. 870 TO U.S. SENATE



After months of uncertainty, the U.S. House of Representatives has voted to pass the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S. 870). It will now move on to the U.S. Senate for final passage.

This bill prevents the termination of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG; commonly known as the "FIRE Grant") and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs. It also authorizes congressional funding for future analytical programs at the U.S. Fire Administration.

Specifically, the bill's sponsors seek:

- The authorization of \$750 million in funding for the AFG and SAFER grant programs from FY 2024 through FY 2028.
- A delay of the sunset date for both programs to September 30, 2030.
- The authorization of \$95 million in federal funding for the USFA, specifically to aid in the development of the National Emergency Response Information System; to develop EMS programs at USFA; and to fund an effort to examine the cause of major fires and report on best practices to prevent them in the future.

S. 870 also includes provisions to promote the development of nuclear energy in the United States.

"This is a momentous occasion," said Fire Chief John S. Butler, President and Board Chair of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. "I would like to personally thank the Congressional Fire Services Caucus leadership for their persistence in passing this vital legislation. To Representatives Bill Pascrell, Jr., Mike Bost, Steny Hoyer, and Brian Fitzpatrick, Representative Tom Kean, Jr., the sponsor of the House companion bill, Representatives Frank Lucas and Zoe Lofgren, the chairman and the ranking member of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee: thank you for standing up and supporting our nation's fire service. This bill will protect critical sources of funding and training for local fire and EMS departments."

The Senate must now consider and pass S. 870. The bill passed the full Senate on April 20, 2023, but was then amended in the House. So, it needs to be passed again in the Senate. The IAFC looks forward to working with our supporters in the Senate to ensure final passage of this important legislation.

Ken LaSala is the IAFC's Director of Government Relations & Policy.

# ON THE MOVE & ODDS AND ENDS

## **Hanover County Fire-EMS appoints man with nearly 30 years of service as its new Chief**

Hanover Fire-EMS has appointed its new Chief, selecting a man who has spent 27 years with the department and served as its interim chief for the past five months following the previous Chief's retirement. According to an April 2 press release from the county, Christopher Anderson has been chosen to replace the previous Chief, Jethro Piland, as the Chief of Hanover Fire-EMS. Anderson took up the role of interim chief after Piland retired in November 2023. Now, the county appears to be making this promotion official. "Chris has dedicated more than two decades of service to this department and is positioned to propel Hanover Fire-EMS into an agency that will benefit our community for the next 20 years," said County Administrator John A. Budesky in the release. "His progressive mindset and impeccable moral character make him the best choice to lead Fire-EMS."

## **VFCA BOD appoints Vice President for LS/CRR Section**

The LS/CRR Section started this year without a VP for the section. Section President Jay Davis reported that he has been actively working to find a new VP for the section, and would like to offer Charles Knowles as the new VP for the LS/CRR Section to serve for year 2024. Charles is a 30-year veteran and Battalion Chief with the Chesterfield Fire & EMS Department. Davis went on the say that he met with Charles recently to confirm his interest in the section and to discuss goals for the year and future projects he has been working on. Davis went on to say Charles agreed to serve this year and will be working with the membership committee to boost interest in the section. He is looking forward to the opportunity and has agreed to serve and work with the committee. My goal will be to get Charles established in the section, assist with membership and social media outreach, and to have him prepared to move into the section president seat next year.

## **Norfolk taps 40-year veteran as new fire chief**

The City of Norfolk officially has a new fire chief. Interim Chief Sidney Carroll accepted the full-time position, City Manager Pat Roberts announced recently. Carroll replaces former Chief John DiBacco, who left in December for a new role in Hagerstown, Maryland's fire department after working his way up in Norfolk since 1992. Carroll's first official day on the job is May 4. Carroll is a Norfolk native and has worked in the fire department since January 1982. In that time he has served as a supervisor in all three operational battalions including working as the health & safety officer. He also served on the core values development committee for Norfolk Fire-Rescue and was chair of the department's diversity committee, according to the news release.

## **Newport News names new fire chief**

Newport News City Manager Alan K. Archer has tapped Wesley A. Rogers to be the city's new fire chief. Rogers currently serves as Interim Fire Chief for the city. "Wesley has a wealth of experience in fire and emergency medical services as well as emergency management and will be a tremendous asset to our city and our citizens," Archer said. "We are delighted to have him lead the extraordinary men and women of our nationally and internationally recognized Fire Department." A twenty-year veteran of the department, Rogers has served in various capacities in operations, special operations, support services, professional development

and the training division. "As the Interim Fire Chief, I am honored to accept the position of Fire Chief and continue to lead this department with dedication and integrity," Rogers said.

## **Franklin County appoints Fowler as chief**

Michael Fowler was recently appointed fire chief in Franklin County. He began his duties on April 8th. Chief Fowler brings more than 20 years of fire and EMS experience with him to his new position. Michael is an EMT-P and has a Bachelor's degree in Fire Administration from Columbia Southern University. Previously he worked for James City County and Newport News Fire Departments after serving in the U.S. Army. He is married, has two young children and one adult son currently serving in the Army.

## **Assistant Fire Chief Ronald Brown named Interim Chief in King William County**

County Administrator Percy Ashcraft has recently named Assistant Fire Chief Ronald Brown as the Interim Fire Chief in Prince William County. He replaces former Chief Stacy Reeves.

## **Taylor named Interim Chief in Prince George**

Chris Taylor was recently named Interim Chief of Fire, EMS, & Emergency Management in Prince George County by County Administrator Jeffrey D. Stroke.

## **Scott Garber retires from Staunton**

We have recently learned that Chief Scott Garber has retired from Staunton Fire Department effective 4-20-24. City of Staunton Deputy Fire Chief Jason Ball has been appointed Interim Fire Chief. Ball has been with the City of Staunton's Fire and Rescue Department for over 25 years. The city will soon begin its recruitment efforts to fill the fire chief position on a permanent basis.

## **Dinwiddie County fire chief to retire**

Dennis E. Hale, Chief of Fire & EMS for Dinwiddie County has announced that after nearly 20 years with the County, he will retire effective July 1, 2024. Chief Hale is a graduate of Dinwiddie County High School and Longwood College (University). The first four years of his career were spent teaching Math and Physics at Colonial Heights High School. In 1995, he was hired as a firefighter for Chesterfield County. In 2004, Dennis returned home to Dinwiddie to become the Division Chief of Public Safety, and later was named the first ever, Chief of Fire & EMS for Dinwiddie County.

## **Chief Hoover from Colonial Heights set to retire**

Colonial Heights Fire Chief Wayne Hoover recently announced that he will retire on July 1. Prior to being named Fire Chief in May of 2020, he served as Deputy Chief. Hoover has more than 30 years' experience as a first responder.

## **DOF FF killed while fighting a wildfire in Scott Co.**

On 4/1, the Virginia Department of Forestry reported a Scott County part-time firefighter died while fighting a three-acre wildfire on Saturday, March 30. The Department of Forestry said firefighter James C. Ward collapsed while working on a hand crew fighting a wildfire on Garland Drive in Scott County. He was taken to Holston Valley Medical Center in Kingsport, TN where he did not recover. Ward was an experienced DOF part-time firefighter who had worked with the agency since 1998. He leaves behind his wife and a son. "It is with a heavy heart that we share such sad news on this Easter afternoon," said State Forester Rob Farrell. "Please keep James' loved ones and his firefighter family in your thoughts and prayers. And remember, everything you do to prevent wildfires helps protect our brave first responders."

# Virginia Fire Chiefs Association 2024 Volunteer Summit Series

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# COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION FOR FIRST RESPONDER SUPPORT

Morgan Moore

Researchers at George Mason University's Center for Adaptive Systems of Brain-Body Interactions and in the Sports Medicine Assessment Research Testing (SMART) Laboratory are working to improve the health and well-being of first responders. In 2019, Dr. Joel Martin launched the Fit2Serve project, which supports local firefighters, law enforcement officers, the Virginia Army National Guard, and the George Mason University ROTC through various community outreach activities. Currently, a collaborative project with the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is examining physical and cognitive changes during a standard tour of the current shift schedule using both subjective and objective performance measures. Working in partnership with CASBBI faculty, SMART Laboratory faculty are dedicated to addressing the full spectrum of challenges faced by emergency responders.

An innovative research traineeship program at CASBBI, funded by the National Science Foundation, is bringing together researchers from different disciplines and backgrounds to work alongside community partners to co-create new solutions to challenging public health problems, such as mental health, substance misuse, chronic disease management, and interpersonal violence, by working with communities, non-profits, advocacy groups, cities, hospitals, and faith-based organizations in Virginia.

A key first step of this program is to better understand the diverse perspectives of those with lived experience in the community. Researchers spoke with over 150 people, including firefighters (both career and volunteer), paramedics, professionals, organizations, peer support, and family members to learn about their experiences. Several key themes and patterns emerged through these conversations. One prominent issue was the high level of stress and mental health challenges faced by first responders, including PTSD, burnout, and anxiety. There was a strong consensus on the need for proactive support rather than reactive measures, emphasizing the importance of early intervention and continuous care. Many first responders highlighted a significant disconnect between leadership and those in the field, stressing the necessity for better communication and understanding. Another critical theme was the need to reimagine peer support, enabling first responders to connect across the state and access essential resources. The feedback underscored the desire for human connections, with many individuals not living near the departments they serve or seeking to expand their networks. Furthermore, the conversations revealed the vital role of family support and the unique challenges families face, such as managing the demanding schedules and emotional toll of their loved ones' jobs. There was also a strong call for enhanced cultural competency training for professionals working with first responders to ensure more effective and empathetic care.

These insights have shaped the development of DutyFit, a new initiative that will attempt to address these recurring issues by focusing on holistic support

systems encompassing mental health, peer connections, family involvement, and professional training. This ambitious initiative seeks to transform the landscape of first responder support, creating a more connected and resilient community. Looking ahead, Mason aims to expand this research by creating a holistic, wellness-oriented, community-centered platform for first responders. Future research will develop strategies to foster early intervention and enhance peer and support networks across the state. Research will also develop cultural competency training for professionals.

We are actively seeking community partners with peer support groups, first responder departments, family members, and professionals to join us in this important initiative. We invite anyone interested in learning more about the project or exploring potential collaborations to reach out. Your involvement can make a significant impact in creating a holistic, community-centered wellness solution.

For more information or to discuss how you can contribute, please contact:

Morgan Moore  
Assistant Director Community Health Initiatives  
George Mason University  
mmoore56@gmu.edu

Join us in building a stronger, healthier community for those who dedicate their lives to protecting others.

For updates, information, and ways to keep in touch on DutyFit, LLC, visit [www.dutyfit.org](http://www.dutyfit.org)

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# ROANOKE SHAKERS FORUM HELD

Marci Stone, Division 6 Vice President

On March 2nd, 21 people participated in the Roanoke (Division 6) Shakers Forum.. The forum was facilitated by Chief Hoback and Chief Prillaman. The event provided an opportunity for some great discussions.

Topics that were placed on the board for discussion: Fire Station Construction, EMS Training, Apparatus Cost, NFPA compliance cost, Online Testing, Regulations, Responder Burnout, Recruitment/Retention, Mental Health, Lack of Training Requirements for Virginia Firefighters, Volunteer Leadership, Staffing Shortages, EMS Pharmacy Changes, Cannabis Use, Performance Measures, EV Vehicle Fires, CNG Fires, Security Film on Windows, Electric Fire Trucks, Competitive Wages.

The topics that we had time to discuss in detail were:

1. State OEMS Certifications: the lack of offerings/seats throughout the Commonwealth has resulted in challenges for both career and volunteer agencies.
  - Having a state certification and testing program although it may cost the state money, it is needed to ensure classes are offered right in the community not at a college/community college that can be a drive of one hour away each direction.
2. NFPA standards/supply chain have resulted in apparatus/equipment cost increases to a point where many localities are struggling to pay for equipment and resources.
  - Consider regional cooperation for apparatus purchases, not having 'spec' truck, but having a regional model may result in lower cost; some discussion on buy-back programs or lease programs; discussion on commercial cab vs. custom cab and cost savings.
  - Consider discussion to have emission regulations dropped from laws for emergency vehicles; DEF sensors an issue for fire apparatus.
3. Online testing an option through VDFP: test bank is about 16 weeks out from going live, piloting an online program, challenge will be ensuring every locality has Wi-Fi access; allows for faster turnaround.
4. Lack of State Wide adopted Training Requirement for VA Firefighters.
  - Consider minimum entry training standards for firefighters, mutual aid safety concerns when personnel respond on a truck identifying as firefighters, but not trained or equipped to make entry or be RIT for other neighboring crews; consider small class catered to SWVA for hands on training, command and control and pump operations-suggestion was to talk with State FF Association as that is where push back has been in past.
  - Consider bring back Chief Officer 101 course through VDFP.
5. Burnout and the need for PTSD training and peer support for career and volunteers.
  - Consideration for VFCA to have a member representing the Peer Support Branch.
6. Recruitment

- SAFER grant for volunteer recruitment campaign making sure that all localities have access to the videos, also see if there is an option to have the campaign expand to be for 'firefighters' not just volunteers since every community is in need.
  - Show SAFER campaign in movie theaters, have QR codes.
  - Work with local economic development to see if they can recruit people to workforce both career and volunteer.
7. Volunteer Leadership
    - More discussion on Chief 101.
    - Competency Check-Offs for each position.
  8. Pay and Compensation
    - Each locality stealing from each other, perhaps have advanced discussion so that region stays close in pay.
    - Volunteers: consider SAFER program for pay per call or reimbursement of college tuition, live in programs, reduced taxes on personal property, change LOSAP to annual payout versus retirement.
  9. EV fires and CNG fires
    - Information provided by Bedford Fire Department will distribute.
    - EV fires one agency purchasing wench and 60+ foot of chain to pull car away from exposures and let burn, attempt to suppress with blanket/foam.
    - Need training for how to extricate from EV vehicles throughout the state.
    - Lobby to have ordinances changed and mark homes that have in home car chargers with special plaque.
    - CNG fires risk of explosion, similar to call in Los Angeles.
  10. Cannabis
    - Currently no way to test for intoxication, only levels and intoxication is undefined.
    - Risk when driving emergency apparatus.
    - Line of duty death, it is understood by many attending that if LODD occurs it will not be covered.
    - Lots of concerns with liability, but no real answers.
    - Suggestion to evaluate personnel at the beginning of each shift, but what does that look like?



# SPARKING INTEREST: THE VIRGINIA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS SECTION CONTINUES TO GROW AND DEVELOP!

Mandy Waybright



The VFCA Administrative Professionals Section holds quarterly meetings as a way for members to get together to discuss upcoming business, to network and to grow professionally. Members volunteer to host meetings, which gives us the opportunity to see diverse viewpoints and to learn and grow as a team. On May 17th Suzette Dismuke and the team at Henrico Division of Fire hosted our quarterly meeting at the Henrico Sports and Events Center.

Here are a few highlights from that meeting:

- Dr. Benjamin Martin, Captain of Strategic Communication and Infrastructure had the group participate in a hands-on communication exercise.
- Sydnei Douglas, Fitness and Wellness Trainer with Henrico County Human Resources had us rolling out the yoga mats and working on breathing and mobility exercises.
- Henrico County Division of Fire, Captain Joe Johnson discussed the Citizen's Academy with the group. After his presentation we transitioned outside for hands on activities which allowed for an immersive and interactive learning experience.

Follow us on Facebook at VFCA-Administrative Professionals Section so that you don't miss out on the latest updates and events including quarterly meetings, volunteer opportunities, and our annual retreat.

**SAVE THE DATE:** Harrisonburg Fire Department will be hosting our Annual Retreat in Harrisonburg on September 19th and 20th!

We are always looking for new members to join our section and to help make a difference in the fire service. For more information contact Mandy Waybright at [mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov](mailto:mandy.waybright@harrisonburgva.gov) or at 540-481-0670.



## SAVE THE DATE

Harrisonburg Fire Department will be hosting our Annual Retreat in Harrisonburg on September 19th and 20th





# VFCF ANNOUNCES BENEFIT GOLF TOURNAMENTS FOR 2024



The Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation will be holding three benefit golf tournaments around the Commonwealth in 2024. 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>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 2024 is \$50,000.

# INAUGURAL SMALL FIRE DEPARTMENT SUMMIT HELD

Matt Fox/Kevin Good  
Photos Kevin Good

On March 28th and 29th the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association in partnership with Fredericksburg Fire Department hosted the first ever Small Department Summit. Emergency Services leaders from 14 different organizations came together to discuss the unique challenges that smaller fire departments face. Throughout the day topics such as recruitment, retention, training, grants, officer development, health and safety were discussed. Presentations from Fredericksburg Fire Department and the City of Manassas Fire and Rescue highlighted various challenges, but also success stories facing smaller departments.

On the evening of March 28th attendees were treated to a great social event at Virginia Credit Union Stadium, home of the Fredericksburg Nationals baseball team. Sponsored by Atlantic Emergency Solutions and Motorola Solutions, folks enjoyed great food and drinks overlooking the beautiful ballpark. The networking event was enjoyed by all.

On Day 2, Craig Haigh, retired Fire Chief from Hanover Park, Illinois led discussions about retention, message sending vs. message receiving, building positive cultures and dynamic leadership principles. Chief Haigh shared case studies and challenged the traditional way of thinking of those in the room which helped bring the conversations over the two days together. Participants shared their individual leadership journeys and organizational challenges that sparked fantastic dialogue.

In closing, the Small Department Summit was a success! Relationships were built that will hopefully create a new information sharing network among our smaller organizations. I would imagine participants have a new found appreciation for the unique challenges that their peers are facing around Virginia's fire service. A special thank you to Atlantic Emergency Solutions, ACI Fire and Rescue, and Motorola Solutions for sponsoring the lunches and social event. Also thank you to Fredericksburg Fire Chief Mike Jones for the vision and hosting of the first Small Department Summit.

If you are interested in hosting next year's Small Department Summit please reach out to Deputy Chief Matt Fox at [mfox@afd.fredericksburg.gov](mailto:mfox@afd.fredericksburg.gov).

VFCA Board Member / Fredericksburg Deputy Fire Chief Matt Fox kicked off an Inaugural Small Fire Department Summit on March 28, 2024 in the City of Fredericksburg bringing together 14 different departments from across the Commonwealth with teams of less than 100 people to listen and learn from one another.



The Small Department Summit afternoon was filled with a great presentation about the City of Manassas Fire Rescue Department by Fire Chief Ed Mills and Deputy Chief Kevin Franzello. Additionally, Fredericksburg FD Battalion Chief Jack McGovern shared insight on the significance of Health & Safety.



Chief Craig Haigh opened Day 2 of the Inaugural Small Department Summit in the City of Fredericksburg today. Explaining the significance of the NIOSH National Firefighter Registry-Have you registered? [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh) Great dialogue by all in attendance on tough topics facing the entire fire service with a focus on solutions for smaller departments. Everyone left with ideas, realistic perspectives, and additional connections. Thank you to all that attended. If your department has less than 100 members and you are interested in hosting next year's Summit, please contact Deputy Chief Matt Fox.



**Have you registered?**  
**[www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)**



# DOD DAY AT VFRC

Julien Crolet NR-Paramedic, FP-C  
Deputy Fire Chief  
USAG Fort Belvoir Fire & Emergency Services



This year's 2024 Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference was host to another successful annual Federal/Military Section DOD training day. A total of 22 personnel attended representing federal, DOD, state and local departments from all over Virginia. Represented organizations included Navel District Mid- Atlantic, Fort Belvoir, Camp Perry, NASA- Wallops Island, Marine Corps Installation Quantico, Fort Pickett, and several others. The day consisted of three separate presentations all with DOD/Federal firefighters in mind.



The kickoff presentation of the section was delivered by Battalion Chief and incoming VFCA Federal Military Section President George Beodeker. The presentation titled Passion through Participation referenced Chief Beodeker's personal experiences and related them to how he maintains positive energy everyday in his career. He discussed ways to keep crews engaged and maintain their passion for the craft. Active participation from the class discussed ways to deal with stressful environments and keep an amazing career from becoming just a job.



The second presentation was presented by Barry Shugart who leads the DOD CPSE Consortium. Mr. Shugart provided an exceptional presentation on the accreditation process and focused on common trends and analysis within DOD. He led discussions on many aspects of the Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover. The group also discussed Critical Task Analyses, data analysis, strategic planning, Fire and Emergency Services Self-Assessment Manual, and many other aspects relating to the accreditation process.



The next interactive lecture was presented by Fire Protection Specialist Matthew Haight from Fort Belvoir Fire and Emergency Services titled the Fire Offices Guide to the Galaxy. He prompted discussion on common issues within the fire service and things to be wary of as a fire officers. FPS Haight utilized his fire service background and related issues to pop culture references to present the information in a captivating way.

The Section also held a quarterly meeting with both the outgoing and incoming section presidents. The group discussed the importance of participation and upcoming initiatives to include future section summits and DOD training days. Planning will start soon for the next annual DOD day at the 2025 Fire and Rescue Conference. Anyone with thoughts or questions for presentations can reach out directly to the Federal/ Military Section President George Beodeker.

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# LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA, FIRE CHIEF: FIREFIGHTERS WERE SAVING LIVES WHEN BLAST OCCURRED

## When Sterling Firefighter Trevor Brown was killed in the Feb. 16 incident, he was doing the right thing, the chief said.

Loudoun County fire chief says his firefighters were saving lives and should not have done anything differently.

Loudoun County Fire & Rescue Chief Keith Johnson told the I-Team as he looked back on the response from Feb. 16.

At the time of the explosion that killed Sterling Firefighter Trevor Brown and injured nearly a dozen others, radio calls indicate they found a leaking 500-gallon underground propane tank in the backyard.

"Most people will ask, you know, why were you in the house? The answer is simply, well, we have occupants to remove in the house. They were inside. Our first job is life safety. We will risk a lot to save a lot."

Preliminary investigations shows the gas seeped from the leaking tank into the home before it exploded with firefighters inside.

Loudoun County firefighters carry a gas meter equipped to measure pentane, which they explain as an effective way to detect either propane (normally stored in tanks) or methane (piped natural gas).

"Our meters obviously are calibrated to read gas, and we have action levels. When it gets to a certain actionable action level, we will remove ourselves from the environment. We can't operate in an environment that's not safe."

"(It is) still yet to be determined what the crew saw when they got there, what they had on their meters. That's all in the review," the chief added.

It is far from the only underground tank in the county. Loudoun County does not maintain records on the number of underground storage tanks in the county, but building records show at least 2,000 permitted tanks countywide.

As details emerged after the deadly blast, the county fire marshal halted Southern States from delivering gas until its safety codes are into compliance. Investigators determined the company had been at the house that blew up.

Fire officials say as development spreads across the county, not all neighborhoods are served with underground gas lines.

When responding to reported gas leaks, firefighters don't pull right up to the location.

"We start at 200 feet away. That's what our policy is. And then we slowly and kind of actually make our way closer," D.C. Fire Marshal Mitchell Kannry explained.

In January, D.C. firefighters used that safe distance near the site of a gas leak in Southeast. A delivery truck hit the gas line next door to Baby Einstein Child Development Center on Marion Barry Avenue.

"We actually smelled gas (inside and on the second floor)," Baby Einstein owner

Regina Snead said.

She jumped into action, getting 16 kids, some just months old, into their coats and out the door.

Minutes after they got to the corner, the windows exploded out of the day care's building, and the convenience store next door collapsed.

"If we didn't think quickly, we could have been in the middle of all this," Snead said.

Not one of the kids she cared for was hurt.

In the midst of it, the dozens of responding D.C. firefighters escaped injury, and not a single truck was damaged.

FIREHOUSE March 20, 2024

## PROPANE VS NATURAL GAS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

To start, let's define these two fuels first by answering the question: What is natural gas and what is propane?

What Is Natural Gas?

Natural gas is a type of gas that comes from the chemical reactions that occur under the Earth's surface. In other words, this gas naturally comes from mother nature and is not manufactured; hence, the name.

This gas forms for millions of years as heat and pressure change the layers of decomposing matter. Companies then extract this gas from the ground.

Natural gas is a mix of different gases wherein the bulk of it is methane. At the same time, it includes some small amounts of ethane, butane, and propane.

What Is Propane?



Propane, on the other hand, doesn't occur naturally. Instead, it's actually a by-product of processed natural gas or refined petroleum.

This gas is usually compressed into liquid before it's stored and delivered to your home. As a result, it is also known as LPG or liquefied petroleum gas.

Here in the U.S., around 90% of LPG consumed is produced domestically.



# OSHA PROPOSES TO EXPAND PROTECTIONS FOR EMERGENCY WORKERS

OSHA estimates that about 1 million emergency response workers would fall into the scope of the proposed rule.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is proposing to issue a new safety and health standard titled "Emergency Response" to replace the existing "Fire Brigades Standard" (29 Code of Federal Regulations 1910.156). The new standard would address a broader scope of emergency responders and would include programmatic elements to protect emergency responders from a variety of occupational hazards.

OSHA's Fire Brigades Standard has had only minor updates since it was first published in 1980. The new standard would:

- Align with the current industry consensus standards issued by the National Fire Protection Association on the safe conduct of emergency response activities.
- Apply to a wider audience of emergency workers including firefighters (both structural and wildland), emergency medical service providers, and technical search and rescue workers.
- Address a much broader range of occupational hazards.
- Bring OSHA 1910.156 into alignment with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Response Framework and the National Incident Management System.

OSHA estimates that about 1 million emergency response workers would fall into the scope of the proposed rule. While OSHA standards apply only to employees and therefore do not apply to most volunteer responders, volunteers may be treated as employees under some states' laws. OSHA estimates that about 300,000 volunteer responders would fall within the scope of this proposed rule.

## GOV. YOUNGKIN SIGNS BILL THAT HOPES TO BETTER PROTECT FIRST RESPONDERS IF THEY'RE EXPOSED TO TOXIC CHEMICALS

Margaret Kavanagh



Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin signed a new bill into law that works to better protect first responders if they're exposed to toxic chemicals on the job.

The News 3 Investigative Team continues to follow through on this issue, which stems from the "Good Friday Miracle" jet crash in Virginia Beach.

On Good Friday back in 2012, a Navy plane crashed into an apartment complex on Birdneck Road. Miraculously, no one was killed in the accident.

Earlier this year, Virginia Beach Fire officials, told local news that first responders were exposed to toxic chemicals that day. "I know we had jet fuel, carbon fibers, we had a lot of building burning, materials, automobiles just everything that could possibly be involved in a big chemical soup," said Virginia Beach Fire Department Chief Kenneth Pravetz.

Virginia Beach Firefighter Matt Chiaverotti died from a rare form of cancer in April 2023. He had responded to the Good Friday crash. Pravetz said there are seven other active cancer cases within the department potentially related to the crash.



The new bill Gov. Youngkin recently signed into law will create a work group that will look at how funds could potentially be used to treat first responders in Virginia exposed to toxic chemicals while on the job.

"Not every bill gets unanimous support, but this was one of them, and I'm proud that partisanship didn't get in the way and that we all are very concerned and supportive of our first responders," said Virginia State Senator Aaron Rouse, the sponsor of the bill.

The new law goes into effect July 1. The work group is expected to report its findings to the General Assembly by Nov. 1.



## NIOSH: FEDERAL INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY AFTER EXPLOSION KILLS LOUDOUN COUNTY FIREFIGHTER (VIRGINIA)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will conduct its own investigation after a house explosion in Sterling killed a Firefighter. Trevor Brown, 45, was one of the Loudoun County Firefighters who responded to a home on Silver Ridge Drive Friday after neighbors reported a strong smell. Brown was outside of the house and died when it exploded.

Loudoun County Fire & Rescue Chief Keith Johnson said after his request to the U.S. Fire Administration, NIOSH – under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – will get involved into investigating what led to Brown’s death.

“They will fly in resources to be able to complete an objective look at this, which will follow the efforts of this board and be fully transparent when that report is done,” Johnson told Loudoun County supervisors.

Johnson also said there are efforts to establish a “significant incident team” comprised of internal and external members including Frederick County Fire & Rescue Chief Tom Coe. The goal is to analyze the response. “That’s a review process where we will look at every aspect of this incident and find out what our folks did, what they did well, what we could do better and what we will learn and share with everyone,” Johnson added.

As of early Wednesday afternoon, fire crews and marshals remained at the scene on Silver Ridge Drive. The focus is on an underground 500-gallon propane tank that leaked last Friday night. While Johnson said a tank that size is common in the area, there are many questions surrounding what caused the “flammable atmosphere.”

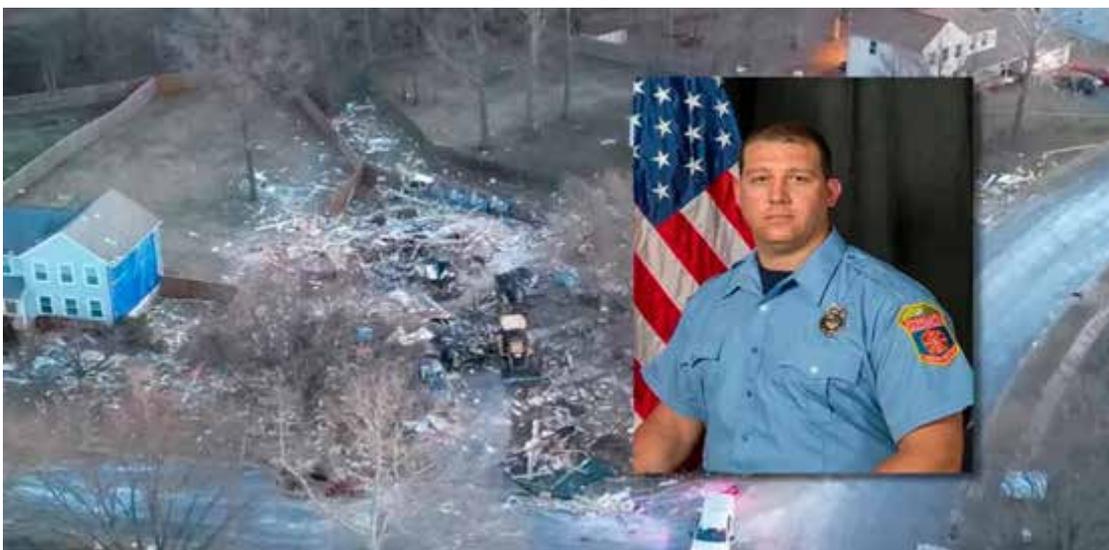
***Two firefighters remain in the burn unit at MedStar Washington Center with second-degree burns, including Loudoun County Public Schools teacher Brian Diamond. The chief said survival rate for firefighters in a position of being trapped in the rubble isn’t high.***

Gov. Glenn Youngkin is reportedly looking into the injured victims as well.

The nine other firefighters injured, including one from Fairfax County, have been released from the hospital.

“We’re doing everything that we can to support the men and women who were injured on the scene,” Loudoun County Fire & Rescue Operational Medical Director Dr. John Morgan told WUSA9. “It could be a month or two or three away when people will start having issues, so we have to make sure to have that support in the long haul.”

Chief Johnson urged anyone who wants to help to donate to the Loudoun First Responders Foundation. To learn more, click on this link: Loudoun First Responders Foundation ([lfrf.org](http://lfrf.org))





# Company Officers Summit

November 14-15th 2024



## Call for Presentations

**Who:** Leaders, Mentors and Educators

**What:** Presentations for the Company Officer's Summit 2024 that embody the core values of Integrity, Decisiveness Education, Advocacy, Leadership and Safety.

**When:** Thursday, Nov. 14th 8am-5pm Social hour to follow. Friday, November 15th 8am-5pm.

**Where:** East Rivanna Volunteer Fire Company

**Why:** Succession planning for future leaders

Use QR to apply.  
Closes July 31.



Questions?  
Mike Hirsh,  
President  
[mhirsh@vfoa.us](mailto:mhirsh@vfoa.us)

Parker Coughlin,  
Operations Chief  
[pcoughlin@spotsylvania.va.us](mailto:pcoughlin@spotsylvania.va.us)



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# CA CITY LOOKS TO REGULATE LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES

David Garrick

Source The San Diego Union-Tribune

San Diego officials are working to propose laws on the storage and disposal of lithium-ion batteries after multiple fires and injuries have occurred.



Concerns about explosions, fires and toxic gas have prompted San Diego officials to begin crafting proposed laws to regulate the storage and disposal of lithium-ion batteries, which power electric cars, scooters, laptops, smartphones and other devices.

The legislation would also impose new limits on where large-scale lithium battery storage facilities can be located.

City leaders praise the increasingly popular batteries for being energy-efficient and helping to fight climate change, but they say new regulations are essential because a rash of recent incidents has raised concerns about public safety.

"We're not trying to eliminate them – we're trying to make sure they are safer for consumers and our first responders," said Councilmember Marni von Wilpert, who is spearheading efforts to craft a new city law.

San Diego would be the first city in the county to regulate the batteries, which pose higher risk than ordinary batteries because they contain more energy and can ignite or emit dangerous gas when damaged or exposed to high heat.

The city has lost four trash trucks this year to lithium-ion battery fires and suffered more than \$2 million in total damages. Officials say they're concerned improper disposal could lead to battery fires in trash cans or at the Miramar landfill.

Battalion Chief Rob Rezende said there haven't been any local deaths, but there have been many injuries, burns and cases of smoke inhalation.

City firefighters recently adopted a new set of procedures for dealing with lithium-ion battery fires, which has required new training guidelines. They are also exploring new tools they could use to put out battery fires.

"There's no way for us to extinguish a battery fire once it's happening inside the battery," Rezende told the City Council's Public Safety Committee last month.

"There's no amount of water that will stop it."

Von Wilpert is proposing new zoning regulations to limit where lithium-ion battery storage facilities can be located and new laws governing the sale, storage, use, rental and disposal of such batteries.

The Public Safety Committee unanimously endorsed her proposal during its Sept. 20 meeting. They directed City Attorney Mara Elliott to work with von Wilpert and city fire officials to craft the new laws and regulations.

Von Wilpert also wants a comprehensive public education campaign to help city residents understand the proper use, charging, storage and disposal of such batteries.

City officials say residents should never throw batteries into the normal trash or recycling. They must be dropped off at special locations or disposed of during eight special bulb and battery collections events the city conducts each year.

Fire officials said no one should try to extinguish a battery fire themselves. Instead, they should quickly get as far away as possible. Warning signs of a fire include hissing or white gas coming from lithium-ion batteries, they said.

The batteries can emit hydrogen fluoride, pure hydrogen or carbon monoxide, officials said.

Recent incidents include a large evacuation in Valley Center caused by a lithium-ion battery fire last month, a battery explosion in a Barrio Logan apartment in April and a Carlsbad family being displaced in March when an electric scooter ignited in their garage.

Also, a battery fire forced a United Airlines flight from San Diego International Airport to make an emergency landing in February. In that incident, a passenger's external battery pack caught fire, and four people had to be treated for smoke inhalation.

While the batteries date back to the 1990s, they have become much more common in recent years as smartphones, electric cars and other devices have become more ubiquitous. They are also used in lawn equipment, such leaf blowers and hedgers.

With California requiring all new cars sold be zero-emission starting in 2035, the number of lithium-ion batteries in the state is expected to keep rising.

A state law enacted last year, SB 1215, doesn't regulate the use of lithium-ion batteries. But it requires recycling the buyers of products containing such batteries to pay a recycling fee starting in 2026.

This story originally appeared in San Diego Union-Tribune.

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# SKEET -N- EAT

October 25, 2024

9:00am-2:00pm

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# SKEET -N- EAT



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**Friday, October 25, 2024**

**09.00 AM - 02.00 PM**

**SIGN IN BEGINS AT 7:30AM**

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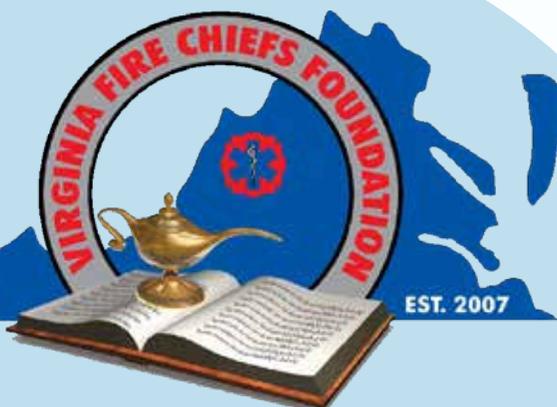
1st Place : \$

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**\$115  
lunch included**

Information & Registration  
Chris Eudailey  
dewdrinkers@verszon.net  
Phone : (540) 809-9397



# 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)

## HAVE A HOME FIRE DRILL



The fire prevention focus for April was Have a home fire drill. #homefiredrill

### Have a home fire drill

- Practice your home fire drill at least twice a year with everyone in the home, including guests.
  - Practice at least once during the day and at night.
  - Make sure to have an outside meeting place that everyone will go to.

Below you will find a link to a social media card and flyer. Use these free materials to teach your community about the importance of having home fire drills. For additional home fire drill and other escape planning resources...visit our Home Fire Escape Planning page at: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/escape.htm>

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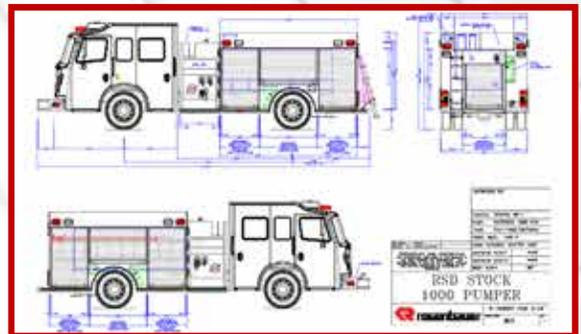


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# Chief

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