

THE RESPONDER

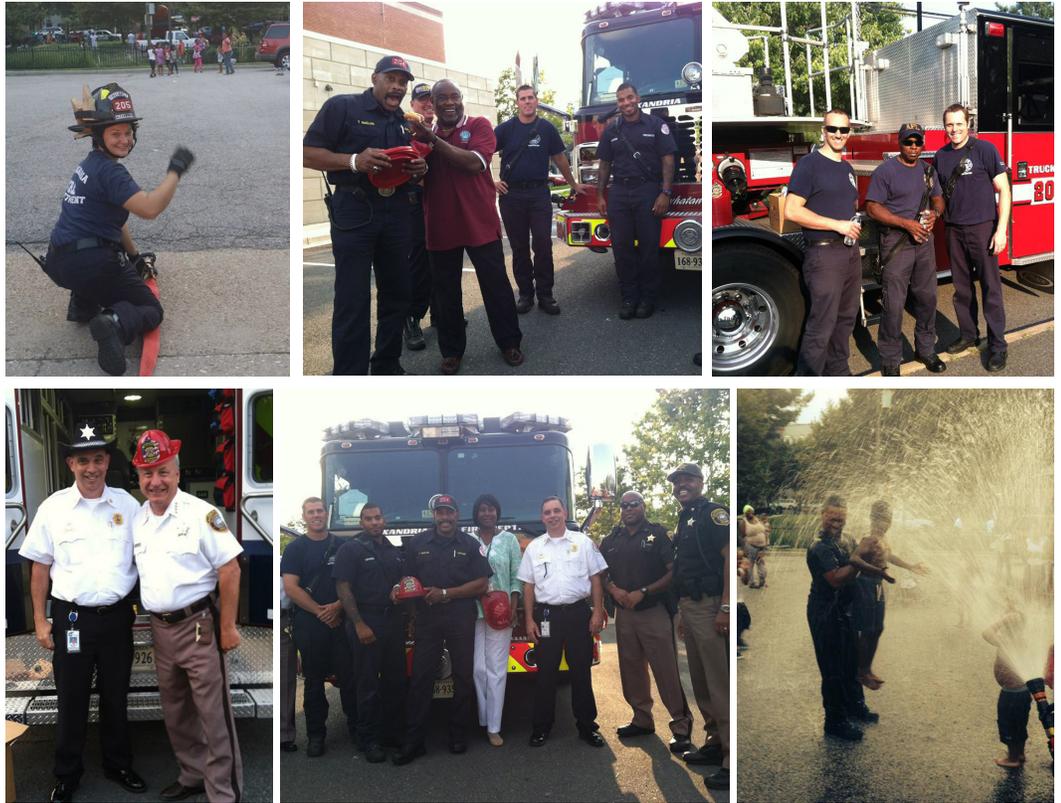
— Dedicated to Our Community, Our Profession and Each Other —

FALL 2014



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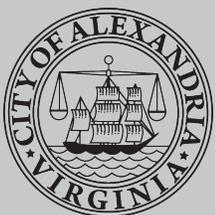


Top Left: FF L. Vanmiddlesworth; Top Middle: CPT T. McClain, D. Stelter, Mayor William D. Euille, LT D. Townshend & FF D. Cephers; Top Right: FF D. Grayson, LT W. Sherman & FF N. Krause; Bottom Left: Fire Chief Robert Dubé & Sheriff Dana Lawhorne; Bottom Middle: LT D. Vaughan, LT D. Townshend, FF D. Cephers, CPT T. McClain, R. Sawyer, Fire Chief Robert Dubé, Deputy K. Truesdale & Deputy Sheriff T. Stubblefield; Bottom Right: CPT G. Cook

Alexandria Fire Department

900 Second Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.5200
www.alexandriava.gov/Fire

This newsletter is written
and compiled by the
Alexandria Fire Department's
Community Services Unit



National Night Out

By: Shawn Gore

Supporting the City of Alexandria Police Department's summer campaign, members of the Alexandria Fire Department participated in the 31st annual "National Night Out" on Tuesday, August 5.

National Night Out is a nationwide crime and drug prevention effort sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch (NATW). Residents in more than 30 Alexandria neighborhoods hosted neighborhood cook-outs and sponsored block parties to heighten awareness of crime prevention. This year-long community campaign is designed to generate support and participation in local anti-crime programs which in turn promote partnership between law enforcement and community.

"I was honored to participate in the National Night Out alongside our staff and our public safety partners from the Police Department and the Sheriff's Office," said AFD Chief Robert Dubé. "I was impressed with our department's commitment to community service and it showed in their interaction with the members of the community they are a part of. I look forward to participating for many years to come."

Community Engagement

Fire Chief Robert Dubé



He's come home, both professionally and personally. Chief Dubé joined our Department on June 9, 2014 and in doing so, returned to his home base. The son of a Fire Chief, Robert Dubé began his career in Fairfax County as a firefighter/paramedic and eventually joined the Urban Search and Rescue Team, which led him around the world, responding to the worst disasters, both natural and man-made. He, like many of our members, responded to the Pentagon on 9/11 as part of VA TF-1.

Chief Dubé joins us after serving as Deputy Fire Chief in Clearwater, Florida and Fire Chief in Louisa County, Virginia. Most recently, he served as the Louisa County Administrator for three years. He is thrilled to be back in the fire service.

In the short time since he has joined us, Chief Dubé has already proposed a major change to the methods in which we respond to emergencies. His goal is to provide a cross-trained, dual-role, all hazards emergency response system. This is designed to increase our immediate ALS response capabilities and allow every member of the department to grow and benefit from promotional opportunities not available in the current system.

Improving the special operations teams is another vision Chief Dubé holds. With the dual-role system, all operations personnel will have the opportunity to apply to join these select, elite units. The goal is to consolidate all the appropriate equipment and dedicate staffing to allow for consistent training so that the Rescue Company will be able to respond to every significant emergency throughout the city, assisted by similarly trained personnel from within and outside the City.

He has hopes for a more inclusive Department, with everyone serving as part of the process and striving to make us stronger and better. This will be achieved, in part, by company officers understanding their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that everyone is completely effective in all basic job components. It is a method to create pride in one's role in the department, whether serving on a select special operations company, medic unit, engine company, ladder truck, as a fire marshal, inspector, or in an administrative capacity. Everyone in the department has a vital role and therefore should have a voice. He encourages all of us to become involved and speak for the kind of Department we can all be proud of.

Chief Dubé will be visiting all stations and shifts in the coming weeks; he looks forward to meeting with all of you!



Fire Chief Robert Dubé, Assistant Chief Dwayne Bonnette & Assistant Chief Rudolph Thomas

So you want to be a Fire Marshal?

By: Andrea Buchanan & Russel Furr

Fire Marshals in the City of Alexandria receive specialized training that is required to be able to perform their job duties. The duties of a Fire Marshal require knowledge of multiple career disciplines rolled into one position. Fire Marshals must be part detective, scientist, and engineer. The Fire Marshal must investigate, determine, and document the origin and cause of fires, perform fire prevention inspections, investigate environmental crimes, and perform post blast investigations. The following are minimum certifications that must be obtained in order to be able to perform the job of a Fire Marshal:

- VFMA – 1031, Fire Inspector – I-II, Four Weeks, 160 Hours, In-Service of 16 hours every two years.
- DHCD – CORE Academy – 24 hours
- VFMA – 1033, Fire Investigator, Four Weeks, 160 Hours, In-Service of 40 hours every two years.
- VFMA Law Enforcement Academy, Ten Weeks, 400 Hours, In-Service of 40 hours every two years.
- Firearms Qualification, Twice a year.
- environmental Crimes Investigator, One Week, 40 hours.
- ATF Post Blast Investigations, One Week, 40 hours.
- VFMA 1035, Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist – I, 16 Hours.
- FMA 1035, Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist – II, 16 Hours.

In addition to the above certifications, Fire Marshals currently in service with Alexandria Fire Department have many other certifications and educational backgrounds. Fire Marshals must have an extensive background in law enforcement, building construction, fire behavior, fire suppression methods and operations, and fire protection systems. Fire Marshals must maintain all certifications through in service training and are constantly attending continuing education about the laws, codes and regulations pertaining to fire prevention, investigations, hazardous materials and related subjects. Most of the Fire Marshals are Pro-Board certified as Firefighter – I-II, Fire Officer – I through III, Fire Instructors I through IV, EMT's, and Hazardous Materials Technicians. Additionally, some of the Fire Marshals have specialized education or degrees in specific areas such as law enforcement, forensics, firearms instruction, fire science, emergency management, and language skills.

The position of Fire Marshal is a demanding, challenging and rewarding.



Law Enforcement In-Service



DFM Tony Menjivar investigating an auto fire



AFM Andrea Buchanan and DFM Richard Krimmer investigating an apartment fire

Meet the AFD Shop

“The Engine of the AFD”

By: Randolph Woodson, Jr.

We are truly fortunate to have a skilled, dedicated, and experienced maintenance staff here in the Alexandria Fire Department. Although this crew isn't dispatched on box alarms or called out to assist patients on medical calls, these four gentlemen are vital to our mission and our overall success as an organization. Let's meet them!

Mike Young has been Fire Maintenance Supervisor since April 2011, and has been a mechanic for over 40 years. He names the OshKosh P/9 ARFF Truck as his all-time favorite fire apparatus. He declined to comment further.

Thomas “Wheat Dog” Wheatley has been with our department for 20 years, with his first 17 spent as a Firefighter. He started on his path to being a mechanic at the age of 6, when he first began building go-karts, and decided to make it his profession in 1973. Tom also mentioned that he worked at an Arco gas station, then owned by Holly Phillips' grandfather. He names “The Vigilant”, our old Fire Boat, as his favorite fire apparatus. Ask him about January 5, 2005.

Harry “Butch” Hakenson started turning wrenches at 7 years old, and has been in the AFD Shop since 2002. Butch loves all E-One fire apparatus.

John Sublet, also affectionately known as “Oil Change Johnny”, has been working as a mechanic professionally since 1997, and served with the AFD for the past 12 years. He also has developed adoration for all E-One apparatus throughout his career.

I asked the guys four questions:

- 1. What do you enjoy about your job?
- 2. How would you describe your impact on the Fire Department and the Alexandria community?
- 3. Compare the Fire Department Shop to a part or system of a vehicle.
- 4. What can we, as those who operate the apparatus each day, do to make your jobs easier?

Looking back, I shouldn't have been surprised when the majority of their answers were eerily similar, as they are a well-oiled machine, with all parts working alongside each other to get the job done. Supervisor Young compared himself to the Powertrain Control Module, which is essentially “the brains of the operation,” while John, Tom, and Butch found their roles similar to that of various parts of the engine, a “main part, that keeps the wheels turning.” They all enjoy and accept the “challenge of working on our technologically advanced equipment”, said Young.

Though the shop personnel aren't the first to come

to mind when discussing the fire department, they understand that they are an integral part of everything that we do. “Keeping the first response vehicles in proper working order is the first step to saving lives,” stated Young. Sublet and Hankenson pointed out that they are on call 24 hours a day if emergency repairs are needed and in the case of natural disasters. To that end, John recalls the infamous “Snowmageddon” event in February 2010, where he assisted with “digging out hydrants and clearing driveways for life alert patients.” “Whenever you get a chance to help someone, it is positive,” added Wheatley.

Patience! Patience! Patience! There seemed to be an echo in the room as I asked my final question. “Understand that some problems take a little more time to diagnose and repair, and communication of issues between shifts would really help out,” answered Butch. John also urged us all to “learn the apparatus and equipment, and do the checkouts.”



AFD mechanics working on an Engine



Harry Hakenson & Thomas Wheatley

Muriatic Acid Dumpster Spill

By: Michael Dunn

The spilled acid mixed with moisture from a recent rainfall which resulted in a reaction that caused fuming. E206 was dispatched for possible dumpster fire, they arrived and immediately realized it was not a fire but something else. They requested Hazmat 209 be dispatched to assist. The hazmat team (H209 & SU259) with assistance from our Arlington hazmat partners were able to mitigate the situation by using neutralizer on the acid and rendering it safe.



Hazmat team members Faber and Givens using detection and monitoring equipment



E206 deconning Arlington Hazmat team member

TRAINING/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hazardous Materials Drill

By: Michael Dunn

Each month the hazardous materials team holds a team drill for all its hazardous materials technicians and specialists. Septembers Hazardous Materials drill focused on Hazardous Materials Defensive Tactics and was held at Cameron Run Creek near the animal shelter on Eisenhower Avenue.



Personnel prepare to walk down to creek site for practical drill



FM Perry, FF Dent, CPT Good and Supervisor Whatley

New Escape System Focuses on Preventing Firefighter Fatalities and Injuries

By: Shawn Gore

Nationwide, there are line of duty deaths and injuries every year due to firefighters becoming trapped in various types of structures. In the Northern Virginia region alone, there have been two incidents in recent years. One incident ended with a firefighter fatality, and the other left a firefighter in the burn center for a significant amount of time.

The Alexandria Fire Department's Research and Development Task Force (RDTF) has identified and implemented a Personal Escape System for firefighters that is designed to reduce and prevent line of duty deaths and injuries. This state-funded program requires all suppression personnel that may enter an Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) area above grade to attend the training and be issued a Personal Escape System. The system requires "End User Training" before the individual can be issued a system.

The system that was selected is a Gemtor Class II Harness with the Petzl EXO decent control device with a 50' escape rope (All NFPA 1983 compliant). This full harness is the safest method to use and will allow for firefighters to "bailout" in the event of an entrapment. The AFD is the first in the metropolitan region to mandate these devices for all fire personnel. Since implementing the program, five regional fire departments have contacted the AFD to discuss the process.

The addition of the firefighter escape system will greatly augment the safety and well-being of the members of the AFD. Many states have begun to mandate firefighter escape systems, as it is likely the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) standard will be updated to reflect the addition of this equipment in the near future. Being proactive as it relates to safety is in the best interest of the employees of the City of Alexandria.

"By providing our members with this vital safety system, we are able to deliver more efficient and effective service to our community," says Captain Jason Wehmeyer.



FF Rachel Grayson doing a "bailout" drill



BC Jeff Merryman doing a "bailout" drill

AFD Implements New Station Alerting System

By: Hilary Gates

Firefighters and medics in Alexandria are no longer being alerted to emergency calls by clanging bells and bright lights. With the installation of Westnet's First-In station alerting system, calls in the firehouse are now announced with a calm, computerized voice and soft, multi-colored LED lighting.

AFD is in the final stages of implementing the Westnet system across city firehouses. Westnet is used by many of Alexandria's surrounding jurisdictions, and area fire chiefs were interested in expanding its use throughout the region. Synchronizing the system with the City's new Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) program will help automate the sharing of resources between jurisdictions.

Making adjustments to the system is the major focus right now, according to EMS Supervisor Jeff Woolsey, who is the project manager, and administrative lead George November.

The benefits of the new system are already apparent, both at the Department of Emergency Communications (DEC) and in the individual firehouses, with more advantages to be realized when the CAD integration is fully complete.

When the DEC call taker inputs information into the computer, the computer automatically dispatches the call as soon as it has enough data to alert the first due units.

"It doesn't require the dispatcher to interrupt what they are doing," said November.

Just as significant is the benefit to the health of AFD members. Studies have shown that loud, shocking alarms and bright lights can be damaging to the cardiovascular system, as heart rates tend to skyrocket when alarms sound. The First-In system allows individuals to adjust volumes for personal preference in bunk rooms. Also, built-in microphones measure ambient noise in different rooms to automatically adjust announcement volume.

"Part of the justification of getting a high-end system is very clearly life safety. The alerts are not as jarring," said November.

Woolsey also emphasized the importance of provider health in choosing this system.

"Westnet's selling point is that detrimental effects on the heart are lessened, and this is better than traditional alarms," said Woolsey. "The fight/flight response releases various chemicals that can lead to heart issues like atherosclerosis."

Currently, Woolsey is troubleshooting user problems and responding to department feedback about the system. These problems have ranged from issues with volume control to having to work with the local phone company at firehouse 202 in order to fix a signaling issue that is affecting that station's paging capabilities. In addition, contractors are still working on installing the system in the city's newest but not yet opened firehouse, 210.

When fully implemented, Westnet will use a different voice for dispatching and for follow-up details; AFD is using an automated female human voice and then a male computerized voice for the more detailed information. This automation has presented Woolsey with a challenge: teaching a computer how to pronounce unique terms like "Oronoco Street," among others. Woolsey was also amused by the system's pronunciation of "EMS 231."

"We could not get it to say 'EMS 231,'" he said. "It kept saying it as one word, and at one point, it almost sounded like 'emesis 231.'"

In the future, issues like these will be sent via a VPN connection to Westnet's server in California. Woolsey stated that future problems can be fixed by Westnet by identifying devices by their unique numbers.

The process of installing this new alerting system was begun approximately four years ago, when the police, fire, and DEC capital fund was budgeted and approved. It became clear that the existing Zetron station alerting system was outdated.

"Zetron was not up to current standards and had outlived its useful life," said November. "We made a station alerting a major project."

Various members across the department have been key players in completing this long process. EMS Supervisor Michael Cahill has spent countless hours planning and troubleshooting the Zetron and Westnet communications. Retired FF Dave Stelter did various station plans in January of 2012. DEC Liaison Officer Captain Gerald Fair has been working closely with Woolsey and his team to get the system working properly. All personnel will be trained in the next few months as CAD goes live in the beginning of November.

"We're doing a lot of work in the background to think of every possible thing that the dispatcher might go through," said Fair. "People are going to have to trust us, let things happen and report as necessary."

By far the most important effect of the new station alerting system and its integration with CAD is the benefit to the citizens of Alexandria.

"The service that we provide to the city is definitely going to be enhanced," Fair said.

FIRE PREVENTION & LIFE SAFETY TIPS

Fall Fire Safety Tips

Smoke Alarms

Get in the habit of changing the batteries in your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors every fall and spring when changing the clocks for Daylight Savings Time.

Space Heater Tips

- Make sure that any space heaters are surrounded by at least three feet of empty space.
- Never place clothing or any other objects on a space heater to dry.
- Do not place space heaters near furniture or drapery.
- Turn space heaters off when you leave the house or go to bed.
- Avoid storing any combustible items near heaters.

Fireplace Tips

- Get your chimney inspected each year to make sure that it is safe.
- Hire a chimney sweep to clean out your chimney every fall.
- Repair any cracks in fireplaces.
- Use fireplace screens to keep sparks and fire debris inside the fireplace.
- Do not every use gasoline to start a fire in the fireplace.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Make sure that combustible materials are not stored within three feet of your fireplace.
- For natural gas fireplaces, get all connections and lines inspected before use each season.
- Remember that outdoor fireplaces can be just as dangerous as indoor units, and observe all safety precautions when using them.

Holiday Tips

- Do not use candles in Halloween jack-o-lanterns. Flashlights are much safer.
- Make sure that children's costumes are made with fire retardant materials.

- Use only fire retardant holiday decorations.
- Verify that all holiday lights and extension cords have been tested by an organization such as Factory Mutual or Underwriters Laboratory.

Fire Safety Tips

- Teach your kids how to respond in the event of a fire.
- Make sure young children know how to dial 911.
- Establish and practice a fire escape plan with your family that includes a designated meeting area outside the home.
- Practice stop, drop and roll with your children
- Teach everyone in your family multiple ways to escape from every room in the event of a fire.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Do not leave candles burning when you go to sleep.
- Don't leave cooking food unattended on the stove.
- Keep flammable material away from your stove.
- Make sure all flammable substances are properly stored & away from children
- Clear your roof and gutters of unnecessary buildup of debris
- Get your central heating system cleaned, inspected and serviced by a certified HVAC (heating, venting and air conditioning) contractor
- If you have a gas heater, make sure that you have a sufficient quantity of fully functioning carbon monoxide detectors installed in your home



ADMINISTRATION & LOGISTICS NEWS

The Four Cs

By: Amanda Jackson

Autumn is full of change. The kids are back in school, the trees are turning, the weather is cooler, daylight is diminishing, football season has started, and planning is in full swing. In other words – CHANGE IS IN THE AIR!

Change can be intimidating if one is not prepared. Human Resources navigates change on a daily. Hence if you've ever been shopping for diamonds or paid attention to anyone getting married, then the phrase "The Four Cs" isn't a foreign concept. In the diamond industry the four Cs stand for the clarity, color, cut and carat weight of a precious gemstone. In the Human Resources profession we deal with four different Cs during the work week. They are:

- Communication
- Clarification
- Commitment
- Credibility

HR works to ensure that communication throughout an organization is clear and those affected understand what we are looking for, asking about and expect in return. This way we, like a well-thought-out marketing initiative, can alleviate the headache of the wrong message being heard.

Clarification is the second C. Getting two or more groups to agree may take many conversations; and is key to ensure the right pieces of information are gathered.

Without commitment, HR would certainly be lacking. It can come into play when dealing with an employee's welfare, the organization's mission or maintaining the trust and respect of management and employees. How HR deals with commitment and works within its constraints is of utmost importance when assessing our performance within an organization.

Finally HR needs credibility. AFD HR will take the opportunity to inform, educate and continue to abide by the rules that make an organization effective. At the same time we will look for opportunities to gain credibility with employees, peers and management.

Upcoming Events

Ivy Hill Memorail Service & Wreath Laying

October 10, 2014

11:00AM

Ivy Hill Cemetery

Fire Boat Dedication

October 11,2014

9:00AM

Waterfront Park

Fire Station Open House

October 11,2014

10:00am-4:00PM

All Alexandria Fire Stations



SUMMER 2014 RUN STATISTICS

(JUNE, JULY & AUGUST)

	UNIT	MEDICAL	FIRE SUPPRESSION	TOTAL	2014 YTD	2013 YTD
Station 201	E201	159	227			
	Total			386	975	1319
Station 202	M202	394	96			
	U202	1	0			
	Total			491	1333	2091
Station 203	E203	138	154			
	T203	31	216			
	Total			539	1531	2294
Station 204	E204	174	213			
	M204	346	101			
	T204	32	355			
	Total			1221	2973	3478
Station 205	E205	266	351			
	M205	496	126			
	Total			1239	3142	4627
Station 206	E206	233	262			
	M206	510	138			
	RS206	62	96			
	Total			1301	3735	5460
Station 207	E207	238	239			
	M207	443	96			
	Total			1016	2730	4209
Station 208	E208	423	328			
	M208	559	147			
	T208	79	316			
	Total			1852	5017	7219
Station 209	E209	176	204			
	H209	0	20			
	U209	0	4			
	Total			404	1073	1493
Total Responses				8449	22509	32190
2014 FY Total Incidents				13902		