



ARIZONA FIRE DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

Volume 22, Issue 3
Fall 2015

AFDANews

AFDA 2016 Winter Conference

January 14-16, 2016
Aquarius Casino Resort
1900 S. Casino Dr. Laughlin, NV

CHANGE FOR 2016:
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE WILL RUN ON
NEVADA TIME
(not Arizona time as in the past)

See page 11 for schedule. See back cover for room block information.
Pre-registration deadline: January 8, 2016

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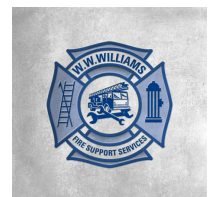
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President's Message

By May Dalton, Sun City West Fire District



Greetings Fellow Arizona Fire Service Members,

First of all, I have to say that my heart aches as I listen tonight to the news of the terrorist attacks in Paris. Please join me in sending prayers of love and light to all those that have lost loved ones, the people of Paris and to all the Paris public safety members during this tragic time.

As I've said in the past newsletters, I am extremely pleased and encouraged with the collaborative efforts of the Professional Firefighters of Arizona (PFFA), the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA), and the Arizona Fire District Association (AFDA). We are all working together for the betterment of the Arizona fire service. One of our main goals at this time is our legislative efforts. Our two main objectives are the reform of our public safety pension system and the removal of the fire

district tax rate cap. Our single, unified voice will be the key to success with our legislative challenges.

The Arizona Fire District Association, in conjunction with the PFFA, David Leibowitz and Max Fose, have been meeting on a regular basis to prepare for our media campaign to educate Arizona citizens about the Arizona fire district financial crisis. We have established a Facebook page and website and have had a few newspaper articles written. Additionally, we have begun a TV campaign which is targeted at a pre-selected audience.

If you are on Facebook, please take the time to like our Facebook page (Save Our Fire Districts AZ) and invite friends and family to like it as well. Additionally, please visit the website (<http://saveourfiredistrictsaz.com>), and registered as a Supporter. There is also a link to send your legislator a letter regarding your concern for Arizona fire districts. Please share this website with friends and family as well. We have already been contacted by various Arizona legislators who are getting letters generated from the website. As we have seen over the past few years, the grassroots social media campaigns can be very effective.

My other request for AFDA members is that each and every one of you take the time to meeting with your state legislators, local elected officials, community support and service organizations, homeowner's associations, etc. to educate and advocate for our fire district financial reform legislation. This

year's legislative session will open in early January, so now is the time to establish those important relationships with your state representatives. It is vital that we are all on the same page and involved with our push to remove the fire district tax rate cap.

AFDA has also remained active and has assisted with driving new and innovative legislation with regard to Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) legislation and the new Mobile Integrated Health Care and Treat and Refer programs. We have an integral seat at the table in these new ventures and can assist with driving the future of the fire service in Arizona.

On another encouraging note, the Superstition Fire and Medical District has been working with CopperPoint, the largest worker's compensation provider in Arizona, to establish a variety of applicable job classification codes. In the past, many fire district's premium payments were based on only two different codes, firefighter and clerical. Chief Bourgeois has estimated that this may save their fire district a significant amount on their quarterly payments. As soon as they have the final determination on this modification, they will be providing the information to the Association members.

I am looking forward to our January Conference in Laughlin, Nevada. Once again, we will have a variety of timely and important topics. I hope to see all of you there! In the meantime, wishing you all safe and happy holidays with family and friends.

Message from the Executive Director

By John Flynn, AFDA Executive Director



Heading into the holiday season and a new year again finds Arizona's fire districts facing financial challenges. Our legislative efforts to address these challenges continue and as your voice at the Capitol, we continue to work with the state's lawmakers to address funding issues which

ultimately impact the 1.5 million Arizona citizens fire districts protect daily. The AFDA Board of Directors adopted the 2016 legislative agenda this past September. AFDA's two top priorities remain AZSPRS pension reform and 3.25 tax rate cap relief.

Last year's tax rate cap override bill (HB2406) was met with fierce opposition from conservative legislators and tax watch dog groups. Even with the joint advocacy efforts of AFDA, the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona (PFFA) and the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association

(AFCA), there was not enough political will to move that measure along. This session AFDA is seeking the elimination of the tax rate cap to allow for local control. Why the change? Because polling of likely GOP primary voters shows significant support for elimination of the tax rate cap over authorizing voter overrides. Efforts began early this fall to do just that. We are working to build support for our 2016 legislative efforts including TV spots, social media and targeted pre-session legislative advocacy. You can find additional information

Continues on page 4

Message from the Executive Director,
Continued from page 3

concerning AFDA efforts to address critical funding issues at saveourfiredistrictsaz.org.

AFDA continues to make significant headway in bringing the issue of fire district funding to light with legislators. The initial meeting of the HB2162 Rural Fire District Study Committee was held in October. The HB2162 committee hearing was well attended and garnered substantial media coverage. The HB2162 committee heard testimony on a host of fire district taxation and finance issues, centering on the detrimental effects of the 3.25 tax rate cap. Here's several facts every fire district governing board member and fire chief should know about the state's fire district funding restrictions:

- The fire district tax rate cap was first established in 1992 at 3.00.
- In 2005, the tax rate cap was adjusted to 3.25 to offset the change in commercial property assessments from 25% to 20%.

- Commercial property assessments have since been changed from 20% to 16% (with no additional tax rate cap adjustments).
- If the 3.25 tax rate cap had been adjusted annually for inflation, today the fire district tax rate cap would be 5.09.
- The FDAT levy cap was first established at \$300K in 1992.
- If adjusted annually for inflation, the FDAT levy cap would be \$508K today.

It's been ten years since any adjustment in the fire district funding formulas. That span has included weathering the "Great Recession" and the voter mandated Prop 117, the effects of which are still being absorbed by already financially challenged fire districts. Getting all 90 of Arizona's legislators to recognize the impact this is having on fire and EMS services across the state is our first priority.

Last legislative session AFDA was successful in mitigating a number of threats to revenues including reductions to FDAT. AFDA was also

successful in fighting a threat for strict limitations on fire district annexations (HB2441). We anticipate facing similar threats again in 2016. It is imperative our membership work collectively to address these and other issues which would impact the ability of fire districts to deliver fire and EMS to 1.5 million Arizonans. In this regard AFDA members are again holding a number of regional "legislative networking" events before the legislative session to engage lawmakers and address issues of adequate funding for fire districts. I encourage all AFDA members to participate in these important events.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AFDA Conference in Laughlin on January 14, 15 and 16, 2016 where we'll discuss the critical issues facing Arizona's fire districts and hearing how we can continue to best position your fire district for future success.

Be safe,
John Flynn, Executive Director

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Mountain Vista Fire District
Lease Purchase Refinancing

Public Sale

\$10,000,000

Green Valley Fire District
Certificates of Participation (In a Lease Purchase)

Public Sale

\$1,695,000

Rio Rico Fire District
General Obligation Bonds For Ladder Truck,
Ambulances, Fire Station Facilities Apparatus

Private Placement

\$1,000,000

Drexel Heights Fire District
General Obligation Refunding Bonds

GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND ELECTIONS (OVER \$150 MILLION SINCE 2002)



\$16,230,000 | Daisy Mountain Fire District
November 2015 – 65.6% Yes Votes



\$4,135,000 | Avra Valley Fire District
November 2012 – 65.7% Yes Votes



\$15,000,000 | Tubac Fire District
November 2008 – 57.9% Yes Votes



\$17,000,000 | Rincon Valley Fire District
November 2007 – 73.3% Yes Votes



\$10,000,000 | Chino Valley Fire District
November 2006 – 68.4% Yes Votes



\$17,220,000 | Central Yavapai Fire District
November 2004 – 76.6% Yes Votes



\$13,800,000 | Golder Ranch Fire District
November 2004 – 80.8% Yes Votes



\$10,000,000 | Maricopa Fire District
November 2004 – 81.0% Yes Votes



\$37,525,000 | Northwest Fire District
November 2004 – 73.6% Yes Votes



\$6,500,000 | Three Points Fire District
November 2004 – 63.7% Yes Votes

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Adapting to Our New Reality: Sustainability vs Pride

By Scott A Freitag, Fire Chief, Central Yavapai and Chino Valley Fire Districts

On a number of occasions, I've been asked what the barriers are to consolidations, mergers and Fire Authorities. While there are obstacles created by finances and statute, we'd be kidding ourselves if we did not admit that, in fact, we are sometimes the biggest barrier. Historically, the fire service has built our own silos, surrounded by moats without windows, doors, bridges or roof top decks. I'm not saying this to be critical of anyone, but we have to be honest with ourselves; professional egos, arrogance and a penchant for building kingdoms has long been a detriment to lasting organizational success. Had any one of these things entered into our process, the Chino Valley and Central Yavapai Fire Districts would still be two separate agencies. Don't misunderstand, there is a sense of loss on both sides, as each has its own rich history and still employs many who helped build fledgling Fire Districts into the professional organizations they are today. While that pride remains, it is tempered by the understanding that our reality has changed, which means we must change.

On October 15, 2015 the boards of the Central Yavapai Fire District and the Chino Valley Fire District signed an agreement to create the first Fire Authority in the State of Arizona. Just 15 months prior, the two boards had signed a Joint Management Agreement (JMA) allowing the agencies to operate under one fire chief and administration. Simply put, the goal of the JMA was to ensure that staff had the flexibility to get the job done; this was critical. They did not want to create something that limited our ability to ensure the needs of both organizations were met. Situations and projects will certainly dictate that on any given week staff may have to focus more on Chino, only to switch to Central a few days later. There were no stipulations as to how much time must be spent on each, or which resources were to be utilized where. While each board recognized its commitment to organizational history and geographical boundaries, they understood that long term sustainability would be better realized through joint, rather than individual efforts.

The JMA proved an important and necessary step towards forming a Fire Authority

agreement. Retired Chief Jeff Johnson points out that there are three factors that must be considered when trying to blend organizations. First, does it work financially? Second, does it work politically? And finally, does it work operationally? At the time we signed the JMA, we knew it would work operationally, however we weren't sure if a full blending of the two would work financially; and, we knew the two communities were not ready politically.

In our case, the driving force for blending the two organizations was long term sustainability for both. The in-house financial analysis indicated that there would be annual fiscal savings by coming together through economies of scale, including a larger health insurance group, decreased costs in property and casualty insurance, one accountant, and one attorney. Each agency brought something of value to the table. Some have struggled with the idea that we could save money without cutting administrative positions. Like most other Districts in the State, we were operating understaffed in administration. Bringing the two together meant that our administrative staff would be right sized.

There will also be cost savings realized through cost avoidance. As an example, Central Yavapai's battalion chiefs have reached their max span of control with seven stations. Given the increased demand for service, it is not unreasonable to believe an eighth station could be necessary in the next five years. The addition of just one station would dictate that Central hire three additional battalion chiefs to ensure they keep the span of control in check. However, under the Fire Authority the combined agency has ten stations and six battalion chiefs. This means that we now have the capacity to grow by four stations without having to add any additional mid-level management.

Because of the disparity in mil rates, we could not merge the organizations, however the Fire Authority concept allows us to combine the two together as one while keeping the rates separate. While not the current focus, we hope that a continuing economic recovery will eventually allow us to fully merge.

While barriers to mergers and consolidations remain in State Statute, FDAT as an example, the biggest barriers we could have faced were egos, arrogance, and our personal kingdoms. Pride in our organizations is important, but we cannot let it blind us to reality. It is important to honor our history while ensuring a sound future. For me, the keys to our success have been respect for those that came before us, an absence of ego within our administrative staff, and the recognition that we live in a new reality – one in which kingdoms are not effective and regionalization reigns king.

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New Area Three Director

By Dirch Foreman, Chief, Highlands Fire District

On November 5, I was appointed by the AFDA Board to serve the remainder of Chief John Welsch's term as the Area Three (Coconino County) Director. As the newest member of the AFDA Board, I wanted to take just a few moments of your time to introduce myself.

I began my career in the fire service in 1987 as a volunteer firefighter with the Mountaineer Fire District outside of Flagstaff, Arizona. At the same time, I began work with the Forest Service as a seasonal employee. I remained an active volunteer and Forest Service employee until 1994 when I accepted a position at the Grand Canyon Airport on the ARFF crew where I served as a Crew Chief. In 1996 I began work for the Doney Park Fire District as a Firefighter. In 1999, the Kachina Village and Mountaineer Fire Districts merged to form the Highlands Fire District. I was

serving as a volunteer Captain, and accepted a position with Highlands as an Engine Company Officer. In 2004 I moved to a Staff Captain position and held that duty for two years. In January 2006, I was promoted to Battalion Chief, performing many duties including Training and Personnel Development, Wildfire and Fuels Management, and acting as the Fire Chief. In 2010, I was promoted to Deputy Chief when Chief Jim Pond retired. I held that position for four years, serving under Chief Mike Bradley, and was promoted to Fire Chief upon his retirement in 2014.

I have an AAS degree in Fire Science, a BS degree in Biology, and a Master Certificate in Business Management emphasizing Management Skills and Leadership. I have attended the Arizona Fire Service Institute and completed FEMA's Professional Development Series.

In addition to my newly acquired position with AFDA, I serve on the Executive Board of the Ponderosa Fire Advisory Council, as a Board Member for the Arizona Wildfire Council, and on the Arizona Fire Chiefs Wildland Fire Committee as well as the Fire Science Advisory Board at Coconino Community College. I am also an active member of the Coconino Chiefs Consortium.

I am eager to take on the new role of Area Three Director. It is an incredible opportunity and privilege to take on the challenges of becoming your new Area Three Director. Please feel free to contact if I can be of any assistance or just to visit. Thank you and I look forward to serving Area Three and the greater AFDA community.

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2016 Winter Conference Schedule

THURSDAY JANUARY 14, 2016

8:00 a.m.	Golf Tournament—w/ lunch @ Laughlin Ranch Golf Club
2:30 p.m. –3:15 p.m.	Registration/Attendee Check In
3:30 p.m. –3:45 p.m.	Conference Opening
3:45 p.m. –5:00 p.m.	General Membership Meeting - All Members Are Welcome and Encouraged to Attend
5:00 p.m.	Hospitality Suite

CHANGE FOR 2016:
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE WILL RUN ON
NEVADA TIME
(not Arizona time as in the past)

FRIDAY JANUARY 15, 2016

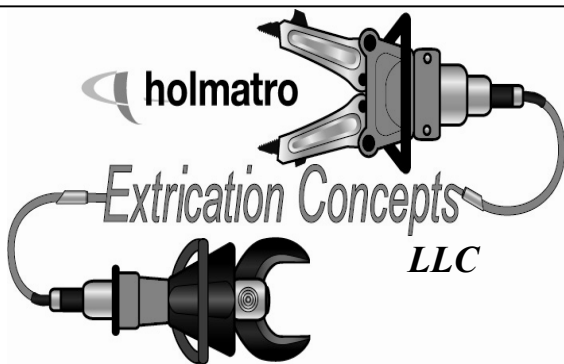
7:00 a.m. –4:00 p.m.	Registration/Continental Breakfast in AM
8:00 a.m. –9:30 a.m.	KEYNOTE: Leading and Supporting from the Inside Out
9:30 a.m. –10:00 a.m.	Refreshment Break / Visit with Conference Vendors
10:00 a.m. –11:30 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Statutory Training: Open Meeting Laws
	2. Arizona State Forestry-Our Identity and Mission
	3. The Role of EAPs in Promoting Health and Wellness Among First Responders and Within Their Organizations
	4. Pension Obligation Bonds-What are they and can we issue them?
11:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m.	Buffet Lunch
1:00 p.m. –2:30 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Statutory Training: Governance
	2. Capital Financing Alternatives
	3. EMS Roundtable
	4. Practical Hiring Processes
2:30 p.m. –3:00 p.m.	Refreshment Break / Visit with Conference Vendors
3:00 p.m. –4:30 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Board Member Roundtable
	2. Community Paramedicine – Things to think about when developing a program
	3. The Current Status of the ASRS
4:30 p.m.	Hospitality Suite

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2016

7:00 a.m. –1:00 p.m.	Registration/Continental Breakfast in AM
8:00 a.m. –9:30 a.m.	KEYNOTE: Fire District Legislative Issues and Advocacy 2016
9:30 a.m. –10:00 a.m.	Refreshment Break / Visit with Conference Vendors
10:00 a.m. –11:30 a.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Statutory Training: Finance
	2. AZ State Forestry Wildland Fire Billing/Invoicing Overview
	3. Human Resource Roundtable
	4. Saying Goodbye: An Emotional Detachment
11:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m.	Buffet Lunch
1:00 p.m. –2:30 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Statutory Training: Ethics & Fiduciary Responsibilities
	2. Administrative Roundtable
	3. Affordable Care Act Update
	4. Shared Services/Merger/JPA
2:30 p.m. –3:00 p.m.	Refreshment Break / Visit with Conference Vendors
3:00 p.m. –4:30 p.m.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS
	1. Career Districts Roundtable
	2. Combination & Volunteer Districts Roundtable
	3. Legal Roundtable



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Drexel Heights FD & Community Partners

Provide Fire Prevention Week Program

Drexel Heights Fire District (DHFD) has been committed to providing community program every October in tribute to national Fire Prevention Week. This year was no exception as DHFD partnered with other community risk reduction minded agencies to make a big impact with local students and families. With all the agencies collaborating resources, more than 1,500 elementary kids and their teachers and parents were bused to a special safety program event at the beautiful Anselmo Valencia Tori Amphitheater (AVA).

"We were extremely fortunate to have Casino Del Sol Resort partner with us and provide the most amazing facility to host our fire prevention week event" said Tracy Koslowski, DHFD Public Information Manager. "Being able to partner with neighboring fire agencies allowed us all to really drive home this year's message" Koslowski said. The National Fire Protection Association's 2015 fire prevention week theme is: Hear The Beep, Where You Sleep! So fire safety messages during the program focused on the importance of working smoke alarms in every sleeping area of the home. The other contributing fire agencies besides DHFD was Pascua Pueblo Fire Department, Tohono O'Odham Nation Fire Department and Tucson Fire Department.

With October also being National Bullying Prevention Month, local law enforcement agencies wanted to get involved in the program. Well known mascot McGruff the crime fighting dog is getting back into schools with an anti-bullying campaign. Law enforcement agencies participating in the program included the Pima County Sheriff's Office, Pascua Yaqui Police Department and Tohono O'Odham Nation Police Department. Safe Kids Pima County also joined forces and included a pedestrian safety message about crossing the street, another issue public safety agencies are seeing as a threat to the community.

So with the community partners, target audience and safety messages selected, the program was developed. It included sing along fire and life

safety songs from Fire Pal Bill Scott's Musicate Program. It also incorporated safety presentations from fire and police mascots and characters from Sprinkler's Club House. All of the presentations and songs reinforced the three key messages: smoke alarms, anti-bullying and pedestrian safety. The event also built-in time for the children to be able to receive tours of emergency vehicles at an apparatus display, take photos with the program characters and have a picnic lunch with their class.

Feedback from the teachers has already come back with high praise for the reinforcement of the three basic safety messages. "When we see comments on our evaluation forms back indicating that students are still singing the safety songs weeks later, we know we are making a difference instilling safety behaviors at a young age" said Koslowski.



October 8, 2015 Fire Prevention Week Program at AVA Amphitheater in Tucson, AZ)

Superstition Fire & Medical District News

SFMD is celebrating our 60th Anniversary this year! Since 1955 we have provided valued public safety services in the Apache Junction and Gold Canyon communities, and we are excited about the future with all the opportunities and challenges the next 60 years will bring! While most of us will be long gone by that time, we are striving to create a destination workplace today, encompassing a set of values and ideals to pass the test of time and continue to allow SFMD to be a leader in the Fire and Emergency Medical Response industry.

SFMD has had a very productive year thus far - Here are a few of our notable achievements:



SFMD Awarded Certificate of Necessity in March, will begin Patient Transports on 1/1/2016

SFMD was notified on Tuesday, March 17, 2015 by the AzDHS that it had been granted a CoN allowing our organization

to begin transporting critical patients. SFMD like most other fire jurisdictions became very concerned for reliable emergency transport to health care facilities amid the destabilizing circumstances facing the Rural-Metro Corporation, the private for-profit company that provides emergency transportation services through its subsidiary Southwest Ambulance within the SFMD. "By obtaining our own CoN, our ability to ensure quick and efficient transport is a very positive step in the right direction for this community" said Chief Bourgeois.

SFMD staff was able to present a cost model showing conservatively that the

Continued on page 14

Superstition Fire, continued from page 13

new ambulance service will be fully self-sustaining in 3 years, with total investment recovery and positive revenue within 4 to 5 years. SFMD was also successful in our petition to the state to waive the required hearing in order to expedite the process.

In preparation for this new service, and to bolster our sworn ranks, SFMD recently completed a hiring process for 3 full-time sworn firefighters, 12 full-time civilian Paramedic and EMT positions, and 30 part-time civilian Paramedics and EMT's. The 3 recruit FF's are already 3 weeks into their 14 week regional training academy being hosted by Mesa Fire & Medical Department.

SFMD Introduces New Fire Chaplain

At our March 2015 Fire Board Meeting, Fire Chief Paul Bourgeois introduced SFMD's new Fire Chaplain, the Reverend Thomas J. Doubt. Tom has served as the pastor of churches in Maryland and Virginia for the past 20 years. He volunteered as the Fire Chaplain for New Kent County, Virginia for the past nine years, where he was also an EMS provider. During his time as a Fire Chaplain, Tom has also served as a member of a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team for the EMS region around Richmond.

Reverend Doubt has a Ph.D. from Temple University School of Medicine, and a Masters in Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as a Navy corpsman, including a tour in Vietnam with the Marines. He worked for the Navy for 13 years as a civilian diving medical officer for fleet divers and special operations forces. Tom then worked 3 years for the National Institutes of Health, directing national research programs in cardiovascular medicine. He took an early retirement from the Federal Government in 1995 to go into the ministry full-time.

SFMD Completes a Successful 3rd Annual Leadership Academy

SFMD held its 3rd Annual Leadership Academy in May in Gold Canyon, AZ with some very big names from the National

Fire Service participating this year. Shane Ray, South Carolina State Fire Marshal taught Modern Fire Behavior; Scottsdale Fire Chief Tom Shannon shared his 'Peloton' instruction; Director Gerald Richard II, the Special Policy Advisor for Law Enforcement for the Arizona Attorney General's Office taught about Leadership Challenges; and Billy Hayes & Ron Dennis co-taught a class titled 'Privilege of Leadership'.

The format changed this year to a two-day format from being spread out over 8 weeks in past years. This allowed more participation from both local and state-wide fire personnel. We are striving to make this THE Leadership Training of choice for current and aspiring chief officers from all over the state. We will be announcing the dates for our 2016 academy soon. We encourage everyone to watch our website for this unique training opportunity.

SFMD Fire & Life Safety Specialist selected as 2014 Ariz Fire & Life Safety Educator of the Year

On Thursday, September 10, 2015, as part of the opening ceremonies for the Arizona State Fire School, Tina Gerola, Fire & Life Safety Specialist for SFMD was chosen as the State of Arizona Fire & Burn Educator of the Year. Nominated individuals were required to have made significant contributions to Fire and Life Safety Education, demonstrated outstanding work as an educator, be successful in increasing public awareness about safety issues, serve as a positive role model in their community, earned achievements in the Fire and Life Safety field, and exhibit a commitment to excellence in their educational efforts.

Mrs. Gerola was selected in a blind vote by a panel of her peers and Fire Chiefs Statewide. Chief Bourgeois shared the following after Tina's award, "We are very proud of her and all of her accomplishments. Tina's commitment to our organization and our community is evident in the outreach and education programs she leads. Her passion for her work, and leadership in our community is a true representation of the entire fire district and its staff."

When asked about being selected as Arizona's Fire and Life Safety Educator of the Year, Mrs. Gerola stated, "It is so easy being passionate about serving the community you grew up in and love. I've lived here since 2nd grade and raised all four of my adult children here. I am so blessed, I have the greatest family and job in the world."

SFMD Completes a Successful ISO Audit and Testing

With a very successful ISO testing process now completed, SFMD hopes to lower their overall rating. Currently, the communities covered by SFMD have an overall rating of a 3, which is better than 93% of our nation's approx. 49,000 fire departments. Only one other fire district in Arizona has attained a rating of 1, and that is the North County Fire District. There are only 60 communities nationally that have a 1 rating. Assistant Chief Mike Farber oversaw this complex and comprehensive testing and auditing process.

Since the last ISO grading in 2004, SFMD has added many new components that helped us in this most recent testing process. Two ladder trucks are now in service in the district along with two new water tenders, the newest holding 3,000 gallons of water. A fifth fire station has opened and 15 additional firefighters are on duty. SFMD also worked diligently with the local water company to get all their hydrant tops painted to indicate the water flow available at each one.

SFMD Unveils its New Web Site

After a lengthy effort to design and build a new web site as one of the culminating efforts to our name change from 'Apache Junction Fire District', SFMD now has a new and vibrant site that is both user friendly and takes advantage of up to date web technology. With current photo slide shows and easy to navigate menus, we hope everyone will take a moment to visit www.sfmd.az.gov and check out the new look to our organization.



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Severe Weather Incident

By Kevin J. Barlow, Fire Chief, Colorado City Fire District

On Monday, September 14, 2015, Colorado City and neighboring Hildale, Utah experienced an unusual and unprecedented weather pattern where two large thunderstorm cells merged in the slickrock mountains north of the communities. The National Weather Service offices from both Las Vegas and Salt Lake City estimate that approximately 3.5 inches of rain fell within a two hour time period. The storm had mostly passed when the resulting flashfloods began hitting town with a vengeance.

An earlier storm had caused the usual flooding in the Short Creek drainage, a dry arroyo that diagonally cuts across the communities in a northeast to southwest flow. The Hildale-Colorado City Fire Department had activated a Severe Weather response, calling for volunteers to staff the three stations and move apparatus to the three main fair-weather crossings to begin closing flood gates and monitor for safety. As the new flash-flooding began to hit, calls came in for flooded streets and the need for sandbags for at-risk homes. A response was made to a report of a young boy caught in the flood near the Highway 389 bridge. Upon arrival, crews found the boy had been rescued by bystanders and was now safe. Numerous vehicles had slid off the highway due to the hail and slush. A structure assignment was sent to a home that had taken a direct lightning hit, finding damage, but no fire.

Five individuals were rescued from a vehicle stranded in fast moving flood waters at the intersection of Willow Street and Arizona Avenue. Units staged at the Central Street crossing witnessed a full size car wash up against the walk bridge. They quickly confirmed that the vehicle was unoccupied by breaking out the glass, then they had to run from the bridge to escape a wall of water and debris that soon topped over the bridge.

Numerous 9-1-1 callers reported two occupied vehicles had been swept over the Maxwell Canyon drainage at Canyon Street in Hildale. The vehicles had been stranded by the first "normal" flood as they were attempting to return to town from a city park in the canyon. They were watching from a safe distance, and were actually retreating further back when they were both swept away by a wall of water and

vegetation debris that had been 30 feet wide and was now 630 feet wide.

Response was slightly delayed due to flooded streets and units being already committed at other incidents. Mutual aid from Hurricane, Utah was requested, with a 25 minute response time. An ambulance was briefly stuck on a city street in 18 inches of silty mud during the response. The first H-CCFD units to arrive at Canyon Street reported that the vehicles had contained up to 16 people. Two young boys had self-rescued and were treated by EMS. Access to the vehicles required a strong-swim technique to ferry a rope across the Maxwell wash above the confluence with the Short Creek wash, both well above normal flood stage. The rope then provided access for other rescuers to begin checking for survivors in the two inundated vehicles. Four deceased persons were found in one vehicle, none in the other. Both vehicles required extensive extrication due to the severe damage from going over a 40 foot fall in the channel. Victims were packed in with mud and sand.

While this rescue was underway, another call came in for three boys stranded on an island at the Academy Street crossing. Two personnel and Hurricane Fire units were sent to that location. The boys had been watching the flood from the normal wash bank, but were trapped when the floodwaters overflowed the banks and came around behind them. It was found that two boys had somehow self-rescued. It was determined that the island was stable and phone contact was made with the 17 year old to instruct him to stay near a large tree. As the waters receded, the crew walked the boy to safety.

As an ambulance was clearing from the Academy Avenue crossing, PD called for assistance on the east bank of Short Creek. He had a third surviving boy that had somehow made his way out of the flood and debris over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile downstream from the two vehicles. He was transported to the hospital with cuts, bruises, and eye injuries.

At least 27 people were rescued, assisted or confirmed safe within a three hour time frame. H-CCFD, Hurricane FD, Apple Valley FD, and

Washington County SO Search and Rescue teams began combing the banks of the still flowing flood waters for victims. Personnel maintained watch and safety points at each of the crossings. The banks were treacherous as the soft, water soaked sand continued to erode away and cave off. The amount of wood debris was unbelievable and in some areas was 6 to 10 feet deep. Three more deceased children were found during the night search. Hundreds of citizen volunteers and dozens of pieces of heavy equipment carefully picked through the tons of debris and sand at Central Street throughout the night and into the next day.

Over 80 calls were fielded from local, state, national and international news outlets throughout the night. A local incident management team was formed to begin preparing for a prolonged, multi-operational period search and recovery effort. Early the next morning, representatives from both the Utah state and Washington County Emergency Management Agencies were on scene and were instrumental in assessing the scope of the rescue operation and the infrastructure damage. They began the process of arranging for resources, including the Unified Fire Authority (Salt Lake County) All-Hazards IMT, a contingent of the Utah USAR Task Force 1, the Utah National Guard. The Washington County Sheriff arranged for the assistance of neighboring county SAR teams and dog handlers. Other regional fire departments sent personnel. As it became obvious that the majority of the search would be in Arizona, Mohave County SO SAR and other Arizona teams were called. Regional air medical resources donated their time allotted for no cost assistance for aerial reconnaissance.

Throughout the day on Tuesday, five more bodies were located, most were over eight miles downstream, leaving one six year old boy missing.

By Tuesday evening, resources began pouring in, including hundreds of citizen volunteers. The UFA IMT teamed up very effectively with the local IMT team and perfected the IAP and maps for the next morning. Two briefings were held each morning throughout the two-week course of the incident, one for trained rescue

Continued on page 17

Severe Weather Incident, continued from page 16

teams, and a second briefing for citizen volunteers. The search area extended over 20 miles downstream, and in some areas was over 1,000 feet wide.

The Utah resources were in the area for 5 days, until Sunday morning, when they left a solid foundation for the local team to continue on. The logistics of the incident proved immense. Besides providing key overhead positions, the fire department took on the responsibility of the Food Unit, preparing meals for up to 700-800 people, including sack lunches each day. A donation center was managed by the Town and the fire department to receive tons of donated supplies. The USAR and National Guard teams were housed in the gym at the local high school. The state of Utah was phenomenal in quickly arranging for emergency funds and

resources to re-establish damaged water supply sources, repairing broken sewer lines, and damaged, mud covered streets. Much yet remains to be restored.

Meanwhile, life continued on. The H-CCFD volunteers answered 80 unrelated fire, EMS and Public Service calls during the two weeks of the active incident. All told, the fire department volunteers contributed well over 5,000 hours during the two weeks. The IMT dealt with numerous "injects" or complications, including: two states, two counties, two cities, two federal regions, two time zones, community culture, three other active searches, two Utah Governor visits, one Lt. Governor visit, several VIP visits and a community memorial service.

A total of 13 people died, including three woman (sisters) and ten children. Of that number, a six year old boy remains missing.

As a result of the same storm, seven hikers were killed in a slot canyon in Zion National Park, and another man died while trying to cross the Short Creek wash about 30 miles downstream.

It was a life changing experience for the families, a major event for our first responders and a landmark time for our communities. The governmental and personal donations of time, food, tools and equipment were so necessary for the support of a major search operation, and each person, each donation made a difference. The support of people, animals and equipment from numerous agencies (over 100) from many counties and both states has helped the communities to speed the process of recovery and getting back to a new normal.

From all of us to each of you—*thank you*.

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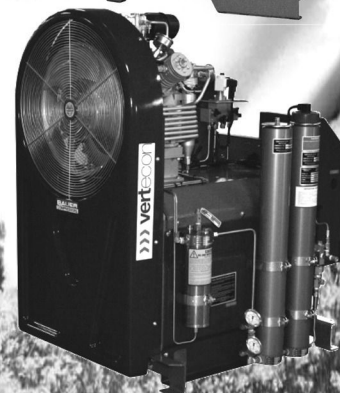


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