



THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **March 31, 2023**

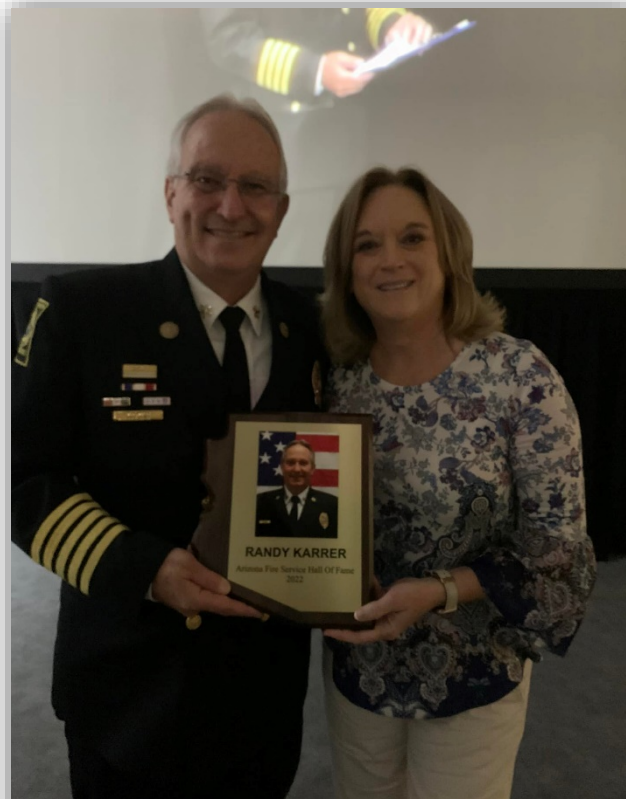
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*"If I'm honest, I'm not afraid to die, not
afraid to live, not afraid to try."*

All That Remains

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Congratulations to my good friend Fire Chief Randy Karrer, Golder Ranch Fire District, on his retirement March 31, 2023 after 42 years in the fire service!

The Chief's Desk

Tune in to this week's CAFMA Connect to hear more from our very own "Papa T," aka Erik Trujillo! He joined me to talk all things Warehouse. We clearly cannot cover everything the Warehouse does in 20 minutes, so we'll have him back another time to drill down and focus on some specific items, e.g., turnout gear.

I spent Monday afternoon at the Capitol with our partners from DFFM, BLM, the National Forests, and with Governor Hobbs and her staff. It was our annual pre-wildfire season meeting – Governor Hobbs' first meeting regarding wildfire mitigation and response.

John Truett with DFFM provided me an opportunity to address fire district funding with the Governor. As I remind the Governor and their staff each year, local fire districts and fire departments are, in fact, the State of Arizona's fire department. We're not set up with a statewide fire department like our neighbor to the west. Unfortunately, due to funding and staffing issues, the state saw a reduction in the availability of local resources to respond by 50% last year in comparison to the year prior. Their number is in line with ours, i.e., CAFMA saw a 50% reduction in our ability to provide resources last season.

In 2022, Arizona had the lowest number of wildfire starts in comparison to the previous two years. So, there were fewer fires *and* fewer resources available for response. If the funding issues fire districts face are not resolved, our ability to respond will continue to decrease even as the number of wildfires increase. As I pointed out to the Governor, this is not a positive outlook for wildfire mitigation and response, nor is it a good outlook for the communities we serve.

During the Governor's press conference, John once again set the stage for me to share, this time with the media, the challenges we face and what it means for both wildfire response, and service to our communities. I was able to point out that our elected officials in the House and Senate, quite literally within the backdrop of the conference, were debating two bills that would further reduce fire districts' only source of revenue – property taxes. One bill would exempt all businesses, and agricultural land from paying property taxes, and the other would speed up commercial property tax reductions. The question must be asked, how can a property tax supported entity possibly operate if their only source of revenue continues to be cut?

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Upcoming Events:

April 3 – Senior Staff Meeting, lunch meeting
April 4 – Labor Management Meeting, Pre-Season Cooperators Meeting, Coffee Meeting
April 5 – Record podcast, FRI Program Planning, PVEDF, Community meeting, Evacuation Zones with EM.
April 6 – AFDA Meeting, Fire Chiefs Meeting PRCC, Citizens Meeting

Board Meeting:

April 17: Joint Budget Workshop 1300-1500
Board Meeting: April 24
CVFD – 1600-1630
CYFD – 1630-1700
CAFMA – 1700-1830

4 reasons you shouldn't become a firefighter

By: Steve Prziborowski

Several times a week, I get an email or a phone call from someone who wants to become a firefighter. Working in the fire service is a noble calling and something that many still seek out.

However, just because the quantity of candidates is there doesn't mean the quality is there. There are a number of candidates who may want to become a firefighter when, in fact, they should not.

Obviously, what one fire department or fire chief may be looking for in a firefighter can be slightly or even drastically different than the next fire department. Taken a step further, a leadership change at the top of a fire department or jurisdiction could change the type of candidate a department may hire.

However, we can make some generalizations. Here are four reasons why you should not become a firefighter.

1. YOU'RE ONLY IN IT FOR THE WAGES

Too many future firefighters get mesmerized by the dollar signs. Salaries for firefighters vary greatly around the United States, and it is important to get paid a fair wage for the work you perform.

In some regions, firefighters are barely paid minimum wage. In other areas, firefighters are paid very competitive salaries that allow them to live comfortably (I didn't say extravagantly, just comfortably) if they make wise financial decisions over the course of their career.

Salaries can and do change, based on a number of reasons, most of which are out of your control. What may be a low salary at the start of your career may change for the better over time, or it may change for the worse.

Don't do this career to get rich. If you're all about the money, find a higher-paying career.

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Gratitude for resilience: Seeing the forest despite the trees

By: Shara O'Neal Thompson

The fire service has devoted much attention in recent years to mental health. We are now seeing increased awareness of mental health challenges, more peer support groups, and a growing number of employee wellness programs – all steps in the right direction. An additional way that firefighters can improve their mental health is the act of practicing gratitude to build resilience.

Gratitude has become a popular part of wellness programs, as research proves its impact on reducing lifelong depression. But what does this look like in the context of everyday life and, more specifically, fire service life?

Sometimes when we focus too much on negative aspects of our life, we neglect to see the bigger, more positive picture. As such, it's important that we consider how firefighters can put their shift experiences into perspective by seeing the forest despite the trees.

Everything is relative, so we must put things into perspective for our well-being. When we express gratitude, a psychological shift happens, which is vital for our mental health and long-term fire service careers. Taking the time to be grateful for the people, the pleasures and the experiences in our lives allows us to build individual resiliency. Further, by encouraging gratitude among members, fire departments can cultivate a culture of resiliency, as members are better able to bounce back from difficult situations, trying calls and uncontrollable occurrences.

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The Chief's Desk Cont.

At the Board meeting Monday evening, the boards set the budget workshop for April 17, 1300hrs at Admin. We've been working to incorporate seven new firefighter positions, two new tech services positions, paramedic pay, an increase in PEHP, an increase in monies directed to Capital Reserve, as well as all the maintenance and operating cost increases into next year's budget. This is no easy task given our single source of revenue (limited by Prop 117 as well as other legislative measures).

Some may ask, why put more money aside in the Capital account? Wouldn't that money be better served providing increased pay and benefits? The Capital Reserve is the Agency's savings account, and they are one-time monies. The dollars are not just used to purchase apparatus, equipment, update stations, etc. One of the more important purposes is to bridge the gap between tax collections so we can make payroll and keep the lights on without having to take out warrants (loans) from the County for which we would have to pay interest. We'd have to budget an additional \$500,000 per year, at minimum, to pay the interest on the loans.

It does not make sense for us to budget to pay interest to the County. We believe it's far better fiscal policy for us to have a sound Capital Reserve account, so we don't have to borrow monies from a third party to cover day to day expenses. To that end, we recommend putting at minimum \$500,000 aside every fiscal year with a goal of increasing the account to a minimum of \$15 million. Given our intent to add additional personnel as well as pay and benefit increases in upcoming years, etc., the need to increase our Capital Reserve is a priority. The higher our payroll, the more money is needed to cover our expenses between tax collections.

I continue to meet with community leaders and elected officials regarding our three-year staffing plan. Thursday this week I completed meetings with the Prescott Valley Town Council. I have four additional meeting requests out with individual developers and will be working to set additional meetings with officials in Chino Valley. Ultimately, my hope is to seek input and to gain support for our efforts. Our need to grow is based on expanded development and increased demand for services.

There's a study that will kick off next week headed by the UofA, ASU, and NAU that will look at recruitment and retention challenges for fire and police. Attainable housing needs in our area came up during a conversation with a member of the Board of Regents; I spoke with that individual again Wednesday morning this week.

There's interest from both NAU and ASU to study attainable housing in our area. I'm finalizing paperwork this week to submit to my contact so he can present it to the Universities for further consideration. At this point, their focus would be on CAFMA and Prescott, but in the paper I'm submitting, I've mentioned that law enforcement, schools, hospitals, etc. are facing the same challenges. For their part, the schools have found some creative grants that are not available to us.

It could take as long as 18 months to complete the study, which will include recommended solutions. Hopefully, this will help us in our efforts to create housing opportunities for our personnel.

Thursday morning, we held a planning meeting for a Significant Event Readiness Forum (SERF). The planning group includes fire, LEOs, YRMC, trauma centers out of the Valley, EMS transport providers, emergency management, etc. The actual event will happen on June 19th at the Prescott Resort. Our scenario is a mass shooting at an outdoor event at the Findlay Toyota Center; However, this is not a law enforcement-centric exercise. Our purpose in holding the SERF is to identify opportunities for improvement within our system. The SERF is a facilitated and structured conversation not a full-scale exercise or tabletop.

Areas of major interest will include initial response for patient care, patient transport to appropriate facilities, mode of transport to appropriate facilities, mutual aid, back fill of the Quad City system after the event while all initial responders and their equipment are sequestered as part of the investigation, as well as patient tracking and reunification, etc. The event will be facilitated and sponsored by the Coyote Crisis Collaborative. They are funded by DHS to work with military, governmental, and private partners to run these types of events to identify opportunities within systems for improvement.

Buckle up, it's busy and we have a lot to do going forward!
