



THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **November 17, 2023**

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"Never become so thirsty that you drink from any cup that's presented to you. Be selective, be smart, be wise."

—unk

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Engine 62 Push in Ceremony

The Chief's Desk

We held Assistant Chief interviews this week with two finalists that came in from outside the area. Both were excellent candidates each with their own set of knowledge, skills, and abilities. The outside panelists who assisted with the process felt we had two good options. Overall, our managers panel also felt we had two solid candidates but leaned more towards one than the other. Both could do the job effectively, so the decision simply comes down to fit.

Our focus at this point is getting an individual started and acclimated to our agency. While both candidates have significant experience in the fire service, neither has experience with Arizona Fire Districts, e.g., financial challenges resulting from Prop 117, staffing challenges, statutory requirements for boards, record keeping, etc. As with anyone in a new position, there will be a learning curve. It's important that this person comes in and starts learning from his staff on day one.

The last of the three new engines is now in service at Station 62. It was nice to see a few community members come out to participate in the ceremony. They asked some great questions which gave us an opportunity to explain some things about how we choose apparatus, how we move the fleet to extend the life of an engine, and what our needs are for the future.

Chief Rose and I spoke with some landowners this week about a site for a future station. Those talks went well, and we plan to present what we have to the Board on the 27th. While we don't have the funding to build a station today, it's important that we secure the property now before it's no longer available. The mapping and data that Michael ran for us indicates that the spot is ideal, so much so, that it will more than likely be where the next station is built. Construction, at least at this point, will require the approval of a GO Bond. That is, unless some wealthy benefactor donates the money to build a station... So far, no one has lined up or enthusiastically raised their hand to offer funding. A GO Bond is four to five years out at this point.

As most of you know, I had back surgery in September of 2022 and again in January of 2023. While the surgeries were successful, they didn't alleviate all the issues and I've been left with some nerve damage impacting my right leg. Unfortunately, I've still been in significant pain, and on days when the swelling is at its worst, I struggle getting my leg to function properly. Recently, my doctors ordered some diagnostic pain shots and have determined my right SI joint needs to be fused.

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Upcoming Events:

Nov 20-23: Chief sort of on vacation
Nov 20: Virtual IAFC Training and Education meeting
Nov 22: Three hours of hearing prep with our legal team
Nov 23: Thanksgiving

Board Meeting:

Board Meeting: Nov 27
CAFMA – 1700-1830

Leadership isn't easy, but stop making it so complicated

By: Eric Linnenburger

Leadership is harder today than it has ever been – at all ranks. Many of our company officers are facing challenges for which they simply have not been trained, particularly as they try to focus on “big picture” issues that are beyond their scope, both on the human resources and operational sides of the firehouse.

Operations are becoming more complex, and the expectations and scrutiny to perform have never been higher. Then, from the inside, we tell our people they are at a higher risk of cancer, mental health issues, sleep issues, substance issues, divorce, and on and on and on. This is impacting all our members, but we often forget how these pressures compound for leaders, especially new leaders, like company officers. Company officers are experiencing all the same pressures and anxieties as our firefighters, while being expected to guide, develop and protect them in these turbulent times.

First- and second-level line officers are THE most important positions in any fire service organization. They have more direct influence over the people within an organization than any other rank. Unfortunately, many company officers underestimate their own influence and importance. It is easy to become disenfranchised about the issues over which we have no control. This happens frequently at the company officer level where engagement and responsibility increase but organizational change or policy-making ability is not typically in the job description.

For any leader to reach their full potential, they must understand the purpose of their position and where their influence exists. While company officers should not take it upon themselves to fix our big picture issues, they are key to the success of our operations and the overall culture of an organization. It simply comes back to a matter of focus, particularly because so many of us tend to lose focus on the important things, especially during tough times. It is easy to chase the squirrels and fixate on the external emotion-generating factors, instead of focusing on our most important responsibilities – our people.

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How young leaders can overcome critical leadership challenges

By: Brian L. Gonsalves

You knew it was bound to happen. Your department has promoted its first Gen Z chief officer – or maybe your department is just now promoting millennial fire officers. No matter if they are in their mid-20s or early 40s, young or new leaders alike must navigate a field of leadership landmines.

So, how can you help them overcome the challenges ahead?

When I was promoted to battalion chief a few years ago at the age of 37, I was the youngest chief officer in my district, and the first millennial in my rank. Since that time, I have had some ups and downs, some moments that I am very proud of and some moments that bruised my ego. Through it all, I learned a few key lessons to help navigate this experience – lessons I would like to share with new officers here.

TOP CHALLENGES

Let's first consider the main challenges young or new leaders will likely face in their first year on the job:

- **Respect:** The top challenge is building respect. Respect is difficult to evaluate, as there is no quantifiable way to score it. Overseeing personnel with more years of experience can be tough starting out, and there is no easy way to gain their trust other than time, showing up and doing the right thing.
- **Generational biases:** Young leaders might also have to deal with some built-in generational biases from those who came before them, particularly as there are currently five generations working in the fire service, each with different life experiences.
- **Experience:** With improvements in fire prevention, education and technology, the number of "slides in the slide tray" – the number of calls run – can put new leaders at a disadvantage.

While those challenges are all tough, I have learned through mentors, plus various training and educational forums, that there are several ways to overcome these hurdles and ultimately find a strong leadership presence. Following are the key lessons to share with your new officers.

INVOLVEMENT

Staying involved will help build your skills and abilities as a young leader, and one of the best ways to increase your level of involvement is to teach. As a young leader, whether formal or informal, you will be considered an expert in your field. Look for instructor opportunities within your own agency, take classes to become a state-certified instructor, or join a nearby community college or vocational school. Teaching helps to give back, recruit new members, mold the next generation, and it helps you to remain consistent with your own skills, and better understand your own strengths and weaknesses. It is also a great way of learning from other like-minded instructors, and in some cases, you are in close contact with retired members with a lot of information, experience and wisdom to share. Inviting retired members over to your station for dinner is a great way of sharing their knowledge with your crewmembers. This all helps you to bridge the generational gap and bond with your personnel.

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Chief's Desk Cont.

My third back surgery in 15 months is scheduled for December 12. I plan to be out of the office the remainder of that week but will make my way to the awards banquet, at least for a little while. My surgeon says that I should be back to good'ish in six weeks. He said I'll be walking some the same day as surgery, so I plan to be in the office the following week Monday. The pain shots relieved the pain nearly 100% for about a week at a time; my hope is the surgery will relieve the pain for good.

Unfortunately, I also have to schedule carpal tunnel surgery for approximately four weeks after back surgery. Am I thrilled?? Nope... I don't have the time or patience for this. That said, I've allowed the carpal tunnel to get to the point that on some days my hand is less than usable, and I can't sleep because of the pain. There's a lesson to be learned here, I'm just not sure what that is 😊

I took part in a *Meet the Chief* event at Yavapai College on Wednesday evening this week. Besides me, the panel included Chief Durre, Chief Mezulis, and Chief Tunis. This event allows us to partner with the college and build interest in fire service careers. Many of the attendees are current YC students, as well as some YC graduates, and others from the community potentially interested in joining our ranks. It's a facilitated panel conversation that includes questions from the participants; overall, I think it went well.

At the end of the evening, I had the opportunity to visit with some folks that may make good candidates for us as we look to hire in spring. One is already a paramedic! I think we'll have some good candidates to consider after the first of the year.

We have nothing to report on the SAFER Grant. Our profile still says submitted, which is better than denied.

I'll close this week with a tip that I gave the folks at the event on Wednesday, as well as something I've said to our current recruits – your attitude is your choice. Choose wisely.
