



# THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **March 1, 2024**

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*“Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on, or by imbeciles who really mean it.”*

**Mark Twain**

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Captain Brody Fields speaking at the 2024  
Captain's Academy

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## The Chief's Desk

The Captain's Academy is being held at CARTA this week. I had the privilege of being able to speak both as part of a chiefs panel as well as on the topic of culture. I don't know why, but this year recalled the memory of the first time I met Captain Zach Fields. I spoke on the topic of leadership at the Captain's Academy not long after I started as the fire chief of Chino Valley. After my presentation, Zach approached me with his huge Zach smile, stuck his hand out to shake mine, and told me how much he enjoyed the presentation. He then asked if I'd consider coming to CYFD to be the chief. Little did I know at the time what we'd end up accomplishing between the two agencies.

I appreciate that the Captain's Academy brought about the memory of a happy and grinning Zach. I still miss seeing his smiling face in person and his absence still weights me from time to time, but I'm glad I'll always have moments like that etched in my memory – they make me smile.

Chief Feddema presented at the Academy this year as well. While his topic included the word leadership, the presentation was actually about how to manipulate your boss... It was good for me to get some insight into the mind games he plays to get me to do what he wants 😊 LOL! It was a great program and offered a lot of good leadership insight.

Tempe Fire Chief Greg Ruiz presented on Wednesday and he's always a big hit! His topics are timely and relevant, and he's a master at engagement during any presentation he gives. I take every opportunity I can to sit in on his classes wherever he presents.

I thought his presentation this year really hit home with some of the things we're working through at CAFMA. Our organization is changing; we have attrition as a result of retirements and/or people leaving for other professions, along with growth within the agency. This means we have a large number of new firefighters, new engineers, new captains, and new battalion chiefs. If you look at Prevention, other than Jim, every person in that division is new.

Change can be good. A fresh set of eyes, new perspectives, new ideals, and in some cases much improved customer service. While there are a lot of positive things happening, there can still be pain associated with change and growth. In years past, you had to be a reserve and live in our area to get hired with our organization. Being a reserve and living in the area meant a level of commitment to the community, as well as immersion into the culture of our organization.

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### Upcoming Events:

March 4: Meet with Prescott 51 and 72, Senior Staff Meeting  
March 5: Labor/Management (Canceled), AFCA Regional Rep Virtual Meeting, FF of the Year at the Elks Lodge  
March 6: Kairos/SECURIS Mental Health and Cancer meeting, PRCC Open House for Billie, Healthcare Recruitment Committee Meeting - virtual  
March 7: AFDA Meeting, Wage and Benefit Meeting

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### Board Meeting:

Board Meeting: March 25  
CAFMA – 1700-1830

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## **Fire service leaders testify before Congress about Li-ion battery hazards**

By: Michael Kirby

The U.S. fire administrator, FDNY chief fire marshal, IAFC president and FSRI executive director provided testimony on Thursday to members of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology on the dangers posed by lithium-ion batteries.

The hearing – “Examining Fire Hazards: Lithium-Ion Batteries and Other Threats to Fire Safety” – was led by Subcommittee Chairman Anthony D’Esposito (D-N.Y.), who stated that in 2023, the FDNY responded to 268 such battery fires, which caused 150 injuries and 18 deaths.

U.S. Fire Administrator Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell reminded the subcommittee that these batteries are now found in common, everyday devices – items such as cell phones, computers, e-bikes, e-scooters and, of course, electric vehicles.

“Fire risk from these devices occurs when an ordinarily stable electromechanical system is destabilized and the batteries become damaged, used, stored or charged incorrectly,” Moore-Merrell explained, adding this alarming statistic: “In fires where these devices are involved, there is often only 15 seconds from the first sign of smoke to thermal runaway and explosion, with windows blown out and fire burning in homes, apartments and businesses.”

Underscoring the fast-moving nature of these fires, FDNY Chief Fire Marshal Daniel Flynn added that many of the deadliest fires in New York City have been caused by e-devices being kept in residential homes and apartments.

[FireChief.com](https://www.firechief.com)

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## **IAFC president issues statement on Colo. medics’ conviction in death of Elijah McClain**

By: Bill Carey

The International Association of Fire Chiefs released a statement on Thursday from IAFC President John Butler regarding the recent conviction of two Colorado paramedics in the 2019 in-custody death of Elijah McClain.

The jury found Aurora Fire Rescue Paramedics Jeremy Cooper and Peter Cichuniec guilty of criminally negligent homicide. The jury also found Cichuniec guilty of a second-degree assault charge. They could face years in prison at sentencing.

Butler’s statement addressed the potential impact of the verdict:

“The unprecedented criminal prosecution of Aurora (CO) Firefighter/Paramedic Jeremy Cooper and Captain Pete Cichuniec, that led to the recent verdicts against them, may have a profound and harmful impact on the delivery of pre-hospital emergency medical services.

“The IAFC does not seek to relitigate this case or to argue the merits. But the politics driving this criminal prosecution sets a dangerous precedent that will weigh heavily on the minds of all prehospital providers, including our firefighters and paramedics, as they face similar split-second medical decisions.

“Ultimately, without an astute ‘course correction’ away from politically driven criminal prosecution, dangerous delays in time-critical patient care intervention and decreased availability of advanced prehospital emergency medical care will likely result.”

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## **Chief's Desk Cont.**

As a result of lower numbers of local folks interested in working in the Fire Service, and an overall lack of interest in the Fire Service as a profession, we've had to adjust our approach to recruitment. The loss of the reserve program means the idea of introducing new people to our mission, vision, values, and philosophies is done over a period of weeks instead of years. Additionally, we have new people entering our ranks with far less experience than those that served as reserves. Dropping Firefighter I and II means fewer people have any real exposure to the Fire Service outside our recruit academy.

All of this means that we must update our expectations. Company officers and crews have far more responsibility to lead, mentor, and grow probationary firefighters in the field than they've ever had before. As mentioned above, some of the new company officers and engineers are now responsible for the development of a brand-new firefighter, while at the same time trying to develop themselves in their new positions. Personally, I think developing new people enhances the growth of a new leader.

John and I talked at the Academy about this next group of recruits. He noted that when the class graduates at the end of June, we'll have 22 new firefighters on probation at the same time. This doesn't include all the new engineers, captains, and BCs that are on probation. It's a lot when you consider the numbers, and while a bit of a challenge, I see a lot of new opportunity.

What we're seeing in our organization will require a lot of real leadership throughout our ranks. In his presentation, Chief Ruiz offered some tips and implored the students to always do the right thing and to have the difficult conversations. Sometimes, as a person in a leadership role, you have to say no, that's not how we act here, or no, that's not in the best interest of you, the agency, or the community.

As he said, sometimes no, even when it's the right answer, can be difficult. Why? Because you can't be everyone's friend when you say no. The reality is that each individual wants something slightly different. To that end, it's impossible to make everyone happy all the time. Ultimately, you can't be everyone's friend every day, it's just not possible. Sometimes, you have to be the boss.

In the end, we need to maintain the culture and course we set for the agency. It's up to you as organizational leaders, no matter your rank, to stay the course and keep the organization from losing its

way. We have our *Compass*, our new strategic plan, and our commitment to serve our community as well as each other.

Times have changed in the Fire Service with the advent of separate bedrooms, separate meals, and handheld devices that keep us siloed from each other. The days of crews getting together with families off duty for picnics, trips, and participation in special events at the fire department have diminished over the years. This has led some to say that while the Fire Service preaches family, it doesn't really exist.

I'd remind you of this – family is what you put into it. Whether it's your family at home, or your fire family, it's your level of effort and commitment that makes the family. If your goal is to work your ten shifts a month and go home, the family feel is going to be far less. In contrast, if you were to have your families for dinner at the fire station or have them join you for lunch in the office, and/or make agency volunteer opportunities family events, the feeling of Fire Service family will be greatly increased.

At the end of the day, your level of involvement, the feeling of family, your attitude, and your commitment to this profession is your choice. What will it be?

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