



Spring/Summer 2022

SIRENS

News & Information for Albemarle County Fire Rescue



CHOPPY

BY JOSH EUHUS

The tones dropped and Vaughn shot awake glancing at the screen in his bunk room.

The automated voice began announcing units being called. It's a structure fire with entrapment. Shot of adrenaline. "Lets go!"

Vaughn ran out to the bay to quickly dress out in his gear. He passed Leo, the driver, taking a long pull off some lukewarm coffee. "Hurry up Leo, we gotta go!"

Leo grinned and barked through his bushy mustache, "I'm coming, you can't leave without me anyway."

Leo was a few seconds slower due to a limp he had developed from a bad crash in the service. Vaughn exploded through the bay doors to join the other members of the elite firefighting crew rapidly boarding the apparatus. They silently got strapped in and secured their headsets.

Vaughn heard the driver's voice over the headset, "Ready or not, here we go."

Seconds later the apparatus began to shudder as the engine revved up to full RPM. Vaughn could feel the full force of the 4300 horsepower the engines were capable of, and he grabbed his straps to mitigate some of the shaking. The ride smoothed out once they were airborne, and the shrieking twin turbine engines settled into a rhythmic whine. Just like that, CHOPPY111 was screaming toward the fire at 138 mph.

Albemarle County Fire Rescue had pioneered a grant program through the federal government that allowed military helicopters to be donated

and repurposed for public safety applications. The CH-47 Boeing Chinook helicopter had been operational for around two years with impressive results. In the sprawling mix of rural and commercial structures with narrow winding roads, the Chinook had been nimble and efficient in its delivery of life-saving services to fire and EMS emergencies around the county. The Albemarle County community loved it.

There had also been unexpected benefits that came with the introduction of the helicopter. The community members and local power companies had decided to make the environment more conducive to airborne operations and had buried all power lines in the county. This led to fewer brush fires and power outages after storms. Additionally, ACFR had become the model for a new approach to firefighting. This bold step led to floods of applications for a chance to be a part of the elite airborne unit assigned to CHOPPY111. They were distinguished from other firefighters by the gold wings on their helmets, and selection was ultra-competitive. They were officially known as Special Operations Airborne Rescue (SOAR), but referred to more colloquially as Archangels, a reference to the movie *Reign of Fire*.

Vaughn glanced around the cabin and saw the Rope Rescue Technician opening the rear door. Two ropes were coiled on the ramp, and the

NEWS BRIEFS

Welcome to Fire Rescue



Caslynn Franklin
EMS Cost Recovery
Specialist
March 2022



Eric Lohman
Emergency Vehicle
Technician
April 2022



Brandon Madison
Quartermaster
April 2022



Emily Pelliccia
Deputy Chief
June 2022

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Letter From the Chief

Changes to ACFR Executive Team

In February, Deputy Chief John Oprandy was appointed to head the newly created Emergency Management Section. As we stepped back and evaluated our community's needs and expectations during the pandemic and subsequent weather events, it became clear that our emergency management function is integral to providing government services and required strong, executive leadership.

The Emergency Management Section will lead emergency efforts on behalf of the County and will prepare and implement plans and processes to enhance the County's disaster mitigation, response, and recovery efforts. We will continue to undertake the "Whole Community" approach and work with our residents and strategic partners to organize and strengthen our assets, capacities, and interests – all in an effort to achieve a safe and resilient community. This important work requires someone who not only knows the aspects of emergency management, but who can establish and foster partnerships with key stakeholders. I have worked with Chief Oprandy for 20 years and have complete faith in him to fulfill our emergency management vision.

This change created a vacancy for the Deputy Chief of Community Risk and Resilience Section. We conducted a robust hiring process with input from all levels of ACFR, partners in other County departments, and community members. Through this process, we selected Emily Pelliccia to join the ACFR team on June 21.

Chief Pelliccia will be responsible for helping to develop and implement an alternative response model for people in the community with chronic mental health illness among other initiatives in our Community Risk and Resilience section. She is a 28-year fire service professional with a demonstrated history of working in government administration. She is skilled in crisis, emergency, and human resource management, emergency response, and preparedness. She has strong program and project management experience, along with extensive training and education, including a master's degree focused in Homeland Security/Emergency Management from the Naval Postgraduate School.

I've had the opportunity to work alongside Chief Pelliccia over the years and respect her leadership and ability tackle complex issues. I have complete confidence in her ability to help ACFR evolve and prosper and look forward to the success that Chief Pelliccia and ACFR personnel's combined experience will bring to the community we serve.

—Chief Dan Eggleston

Choppy *Continued from page 1*

technician calmy said, "one minute" into his headset.

The Archangels signaled for 1 minute and unbuckled. They moved to the door as the crew chief gave updates on the call notes over the headset.

"Looks like you'll be jobbin' on this one," he said after scanning out the window.

Leo broke the Chinook into a low circle to allow the crew chief to complete a 360 of the burning structure. A strong smell of smoke hit Vaughn and he could see the firelight flickering on the crew chief's face. It looked like two houses in a newer neighborhood were involved with several exposures dangerously close.

The ropes technician gave 30 seconds, and the crew chief communicated to Leo where he wanted to put the first drop of firefighters. Leo brought the Chinook to a hover 30 feet above the road a few houses down from the fire. The ropes technician kicked the ropes off the ramp as the light turned green. "GO!"

Firefighters with full turnout gear, SCBA, water cans, and tools slid down the fast

ropes. As boots hit the ground, they were sprinting to the house to do work. The fast ropes were dropped, and Leo pulled out to land and offload more gear. Vaughn was tasked with search; and he made short work of the front door. They had studied floorplans and layout during the flight; and he was ready to find the victim who was reportedly trapped.

He crawled with his Halligan to the fire compartment and found the doorway had been blocked by a large refrigerator that had fallen through the second floor. Vaughn and his partner broke through the drywall in an adjacent bathroom and found a young boy and a dog huddled in the closet. They carried them out just as fire attack was putting water on the fire.

They made it to the fresh air of the clear night and Vaughn could see the firefighters had gotten the dump tank and pump running from inside the Chinook. The helicopter carried 2000 gallons of water in a specially constructed bladder. The Chinook was able to pump a ludicrous amount of pressure due to

its robust engines, and multiple attack lines were no problem. Vaughn caught a glimpse inside of the pump operator surfing the bladder as he pulled levers and threw switches.

Vaughn turned the victim over to the flight medic and his BLS provider, but it appeared they had got to him just in time. Everyone had made it out, and the fire was coming under control. After a while, the area was full of fire engines, tankers, and firefighters continuing the good work that had been started.

The sun was just breaking over the horizon as they landed at Station 11, and all the firefighters disembarked to clean gear and get CHOPPY111 ready for its next job.

Chief Walker and Calvin arrived to make some modifications and repairs to the helicopter that had been submitted through Veoci the day before. The Lieutenant quickly showered and tasked the senior firefighter with finishing cleanup. There was a meeting scheduled about a new color scheme for the fuselage. Maybe something red, white, and blue like a flag flapping in the wind.

Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire Department Opens Training Facility

On April 23, the Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire Department (STVFD) reopened its Conex training facility. This facility is comprised of seven repurposed Conex boxes. While these boxes were no doubt used to deliver thousands of goods across the country at one point, STVFD takes great pride in the boxes now delivering thousands of training hours to the system.

When STVFD dedicated the expanded building in 2014, the members recognized that training on site would be incredibly challenging. While the members invented new and innovative ways to train on various firefighter tactics, STVFD leadership realized that there had to be another option. The Fire Chief and his staff realized that they had already purchased parts of a training facility...the Conex boxes used to store STVFD property during the construction. After purchasing an additional



box and a bit of gray paint, the STVFD training facility was born!

While the 2014 facility was a great place to train, it lacked several key aspects of basic firefighter training capabilities. Over the past

which to review care, but the provider owes the leadership the responsibility to take part in that conversation with an open mind." As firefighters we have the opportunity to enter many job-related conversations where feedback exists. The mindset with which we enter these conversations most often dictates how willing we are to receive available feedback. Ginger Locke, an EMS educator stated, "Feedback happens at the intersection of the learner's desire to improve and their desire to maintain their identity."

So, what are practical steps to meet at this intersection and create an environment where feedback occurs?

Start Conversations

The fire service has a rich tradition of discussion in and around the fire station. These peer-to-peer conversations are vital for firefighters to glean information, tactics, and ideas from previous calls. Most often firefighters receive feedback on the calls where a very positive or negative outcome occurred. Yet rarely are the "normal" (which are the majority of our calls) discussed. This is an excellent opportunity for peer-to-peer conversations. Whether you are returning from a falsely activated fire alarm or restocking the ambulance after a simple ground level fall, opportunity for feedback exists. When we encourage these little conversations, we promote a culture of feedback.

eight years, two Fire Chiefs, and a pandemic, STVFD has been able to add several props to the structure making it almost as capable as the Fire Training Center over 8 miles, and a first due, away.

The newly opened facility has a Forcible Entry door, two VES window props, a Denver Drill window, chimney prop, a pitched roof prop, a sprinkler room, a working standpipe connection, and an extendable anchor system for ITR training. The entire facility has been completely waterproofed and is open for training. If that's not enough, more upgrades are coming to include pre-piped smoke and a maze component to test firefighter basics.

STVFD is very excited to open this facility to the entire system!

If you or your crews are interested, please contact the County Battalion Chief or station training officer to request use of the facility. Please, come use it and come TRAIN WITH US!

Use Technology

Feedback is about process. As firefighters we utilize countless processes on the fireground and in prehospital care. Utilizing technology is an excellent way to receive immediate and unbiased feedback on that process. Filming yourself while throwing ladders allows you to recognize body mechanics and technique. Audio recording a practice trauma report for the hospital, or a scene size-up of a fire affords the opportunity to craft and refine that process.

Get a Coach

Firefighters can take an active role in their development by finding a coach. A coach can identify areas for growth in ways that peer-to-peer conversations and technology cannot. A coach can be someone in or outside the department. The key is to find someone who provides feedback in a constructive and healthy environment. Ideally a coach should be able to meet regularly to track progress and discuss outcomes. Don't wait for a coach to find you. The fire service is rapidly progressing and as firefighters we must be intentional in pursuing feedback in the areas we wish to improve.

As firefighters, we have the opportunity to create a culture of feedback. The use of peer-to-peer conversations, technology, and coaching can all improve the way we do our job and ultimately those we serve.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: fire departments are keeping our communities safe in more ways than one

In 1967, The Beatles released their song “With A Little Help from My Friends.” Its message is universal; sometimes you need help to get where you want to be. And it is exactly how the Charlottesville Fire Department and Albemarle County Fire Rescue first assess how our communities are at risk, and how these risks can be mitigated and prevented; by enlisting those in the community with the know-how and expertise to help. This process shines a light on the efforts by these fire departments unbeknownst to many: community risk reduction.

The time that fire departments solely focused on fire prevention as a tool to prevent emergencies from happening is long gone. Since 2014, Albemarle County Fire Rescue (ACFR) has a program in place called Community Risk & Resilience. The Charlottesville Fire Department (CFD) has a similar program called Community Risk Reduction. Although their approaches differ, the goal for both organizations is the same; identify risks in the community, find a trusted partner to work with, and solve the problem before it turns into an emergency.

“We’re heading off an issue upstream,” said Joe Powers, Deputy Chief of Community Risk Reduction for Charlottesville Fire Department said, “so it doesn’t become an emergency downstream.”

Powers spearheaded a revamping of his departments’ risk reduction program over the past 24 months. It has resulted in a detailed risk assessment covering all nineteen neighborhoods in Charlottesville with dozens of data points.

“We have mapped out the major health issues by neighborhood, where the most traffic accidents happen, and what incidents generally occur,” he said. “With that information in hand, we can target specific safety concerns.”

For example, Powers points out, for area’s that see relatively many falls, or kids biking without helmets, strategies are put in place to turn those trends around.

In many cases, Powers enlists a community partner to help. The Deputy Chief mentioned the case of a disabled Army veteran who called 911 hundreds of times a year, for firefighters to help him reach his third-floor apartment.

“Obviously, that is not sustainable,” he said. “All these calls take resources away from our community, and this veteran wasn’t getting the help he needed to address the root



cause of his problem.” So, Powers turned to local nonprofit called The Gym, who provided the veteran with workouts to get his strength back. “And now, he’s able to reach his apartment on his own,” Powers said. “We haven’t heard him call 911 in a long time. That’s how we and our community partners solve these problems. It takes a village.”

It’s an approach that makes emergency prevention almost personalized. The CFD partners with many local organizations, including the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad (CARS), UVa Health, Region Ten, and local nonprofits.

Captain Shawn Maddox is the Assistant Fire Marshall for ACFR. He is spearheading the County’s community risk assessment efforts.

“Obviously, we are not dealing with nineteen neighborhoods, but approximately 720 square miles of Albemarle County,” Maddox said. “The geography alone requires a different approach. We also see a variety of issues due to the urban, suburban and rural make up of our county”.

The strategy to stop emergencies from happening, though, is the same as used by CFD.

“We actively look for community engagement opportunities,” Maddox said. “When we go out on a call and find someone who is dealing with mental health issues, we connect that person with the right organization to help. We remove as many obstacles as we can to make sure people are safe, whatever the situation is,” he said. “And that requires us to be pro-active.”

“We talk to people about topics that matter to them, like road safety, or the dangers of swimming in quarries, and connect with local community, neighborhood, and civic groups to continue to share those messages,” Maddox continued. “We have boots on the ground at all times to listen what the issues might be, or to talk about trends we are observing. For us, counter-intuitive as it may seem to people, fire prevention is not our only priority. It goes far beyond that.”

That’s not to say both departments disregard fire prevention efforts. Powers and Maddox ensure that when teams go out on calls, they are on the lookout for working smoke alarms and that fire prevention measures are in place in the homes and businesses they respond to. That is second nature for anyone in uniform.

It’s safe to say that with the programs put in place by both Powers and Maddox, driven by data, fire departments play a pivotal role in keeping our communities safe beyond traditional fire prevention. With an ever-growing pool of community partners willing to help, it indeed takes a village to keep us all safe.

For more information:

■ **Community Risk Reduction, CFD:** <https://arcg.is/W8r00>

■ **Community Risk & Resilience, ACFR:** www.albemarle.org/government/fire-rescue/community-risk-reduction-resiliency

This sponsored article originally ran in the Daily Progress on March 27, 2022.

Compliance Corner

HIPAA Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act defines the process by which covered entities need to protect and secure patient’s health information.

What is a covered entity?

A covered entity can be a business who sells health plans, healthcare clearinghouses, and health care providers.

What information is protected and what is the name for that information?

Protected Health Information (PHI) is the information which relates to patient health care services, payments for a patients’ services and/or identifies (or could identify) a patient.

What are some examples of PHI?

Some examples are patient care reports, records from facilities/providers and payment records (bills and claims), and anything that is heard or observed on calls.

HIPAA is not a roadblock to treating a patient. If you ever find yourself questioning whether the information that you are about to give is in compliance with HIPAA ask yourself, “Is this for treatment, payment or health care operations?”

Questions: contact Caslynn Franklin at (434) 296-5833 or email cfranklin2@albemarle.org



Carter, J. (2019, March 29). Guide to HIPAA compliance. Retrieved from Physicianspractice: <https://www.physicianspractice.com/view/guide-hipaa-compliance>

Fire Incidents

Date	Street	Incident Type	Resolution/Cause
2/3/22	Brownsville Road	Structure Fire	Arson - remains open
2/5/22	Rolling Road	Structure Fire	Chimney fire
2/9/22	Riverbend Drive	Structure Fire	Commercial cooking/failure of hood exhaust duct
2/10/22	Proffitt Road	Structure Fire	Cable TV wire energized
2/20/22	Burton Lane	Structure Fire	Undetermined
2/27/22	Haden Lane	Structure Fire	Failure of a metal halide bulb
3/1/22	James River Road	Structure Fire	Cooking fire
3/4/22	Exton Dr	Structure Fire	Embers from a chimney that ignited the roof
3/9/22	Springfield Road	Structure Fire	Spontaneous ignition of oily rags
3/9/22	Monterey Drive	Structure Fire	Space heater into a power strip
3/14/22	Briarwood Drive	Structure Fire	Failure of a battery charger
3/21/22	Seminole Lane	Structure Fire	Electrical arcing due to electrical work
3/27/22	Lake Club Court	Structure Fire	Discarded smoking materials
4/1/22	Millington Road	Structure Fire	Undetermined
4/3/22	Harvest Drive	Structure Fire	Discarded smoking materials
4/12/22	Scottsville Center	Structure Fire	Arson
4/15/22	St. Ives Road	Structure Fire	Failure of multi-plug extension cord
4/21/22	Broad Axe Road	Structure Fire	Heat lamp too close to combustible chicken coop

PROMOTIONS

SFF Brandon Brooks MFF
 SFF Jason D’Antuono MFF
 SFF Seth Grubb MFF
 SFF Reilly McCann MFF
 SFF Tate McCracken MFF
 SFF James Rowse MFF

STVFD Promotions

Lt Geoff Keating Captain
 Lt Richard Kinsley Captain
 SFF Henry Nixon MFF
 SFF Gary Vaclavek MFF
 FF Tayah Mack SFF
 FF Jesse Cosgrove SFF
 FF Wes Young MFF
 FF Jordan Brown SFF

RELEASES

FF Damian Scott DPO
 FF Thomas Woods DPO
 FF Jordan Vitt DPO
 FF Shane Corpolongo DPO
 FF Wagitci Gear DPO
 FF Joey Barbaris DPO

STVFD Releases

Lauren Wade FF
 Jack Murphy FF
 Rachel Murphy FF
 Caleb McClung FF
 Kirthana “Kirthi” Logachandar FF
 Briar Tures FF
 FF Grant GianGrasso EMT
 FF Briar Tures EMT
 FF Cutter Huston RCO
 FF Kirthana “Kirthi” Logachandar RCO
 MFF Henry Nixon DPO
 MFF Gary Vaclavek DPO
 FF Walker Smith DPO
 Sr. FF Jesse Cosgrove DPO
 FF Evan Wade (May) DPO
 Lt Tyler Cosgrove DAO
 Captain Geoff Keating DAO

YEARS OF SERVICE

20 years

East Rivanna Cynthia Tetterton
 East Rivanna Jason Tetterton

5 years

East Rivanna Carol Paget-Brown



Stuart Graham
FF/EMT

I went through Recruit School 20 and am happy to be with Albemarle County Fire Rescue. I previously volunteered at Station 2, East Rivanna,

from 2017 until 2022 when I officially started with ACFR. During that time, I also worked events as a manager at the Graduate Charlottesville hotel on West Main Street. I enjoy physical activity, playing video games, going to concerts, getting tattoos, riding my motorcycle, cooking, and watching anime. It's a pleasure to work with everyone.

Q. What is your role with your agency? Give a little snapshot of duties, responsibilities, typical day.

A. I am a graduate of ACFR's most recent recruit school. A typical day in recruit school starts by showing up an hour early to prepare for the day and make sure all the other recruits are in uniform and have completed the nightly tasks and homework. Next, we line up for roll call and report line of duty deaths to pay respect, learn the dangers of the job, and how to prepare ourselves for possible dangers we may face. Then comes lecture in the morning if we do not immediately go to physical training. The day winds down with chores to tidy up the space and prepare for the next day.

Q. When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A. When I was little, I wanted to be a firefighter or a police officer. Both jobs in the mind of a little kid are thrilling. Unfortunately, my father dissuaded me by telling me it is very exclusive and nepotism played a large role in hiring and because of that it was not likely I would be hired anywhere.

Q. What advice do you have for new recruits or people interested in your industry?

A. There is no reason not to apply to become a firefighter/EMT. Everyone starts

somewhere and if you have a passion and willingness to learn then that counts for a lot. If you think firefighting may be for you but you aren't sure, then join a volunteer station. I myself was a volunteer for 4 years. That first year was great and I spent my time learning and improving my skills.

Q. What would you do (for a career) if you weren't doing this?

A. I would probably still be working events. Ever since I was in high school, I have been working events. I started out serving/catering at events and then went to college for accounting with a concentration in hotel and resort management, in the hopes of working at a hotel either as a night auditor or in a position of management. I ended up in a management position handling events for a local hotel for 4 years while simultaneously volunteering at a local firehouse.

Q. What advice would you tell someone who is interested in your field of work?

A. Get physically fit and stay physically fit. This is the one thing you can do by yourself. If you don't understand something or need help solving a problem, there will be people who are more knowledgeable and willing to help. If you aren't physically fit, then it's more difficult to succeed because it's not a problem you can solve by talking about it. Being fit is hard work and dedication in the gym and at the table.

Q. Tell us about something you love – and a few details about why you love it.

A. I love how physically demanding this job can be. There is nothing more rewarding than working at your physical limit knowing you have done all you could to accomplish your goals.

Q. What is a career goal or ambition you are working towards?

A. My current goals are to focus on the now and be the best firefighter I can be. I will strive to succeed at the tasks I will be given once I hit the field. I understand that tasks assigned to me initially will not be the most crucial or challenging because people will not know me or my work ethic yet. However, by doing those tasks well, they will come to understand me better and to know my abilities. As more tasks are given to me, I will accomplish those and become a master of those as well. I hope to complete FIRE 2 training relatively quickly.

Q. What is one element of your field of work people may be surprised to learn about?

A. Firefighters are 14% more likely to die from cancer than the general population due to carcinogens encountered on the job. When people think of firefighter, they think of smoke-filled buildings and billowing fires that pose immediate risk, but one of the greatest risks is unseen and slowly eats away at firefighters. ACFR has been great at recognizing this and is taking steps to minimize that risk, increase awareness, and increase detection through annual physicals that go beyond the scope of what normal physicals entail.

Carol-Ann Paget-Brown
FF/EMT-P Captain @ERVFC



All my life, I have been an active volunteer in the communities I have resided in. In 2017, I received a postcard from East Rivanna Fire soliciting new members that caught my attention. Looking for a different challenge, I joined ERVFC and began my EMT training that August. Since then, I have continued training, completing Fire 1 and 2, Fire Instructor, Advanced EMT, Paramedic, and a myriad of other certifications, ultimately achieving the rank of Captain. In March of this year, I was elected President of ERVFC. In addition to my service to ERVFC, I instruct at UVA Pre-hospital and volunteer with Waynesboro First Aid Crew. And last but not least, I have been an Albemarle County Fire/Rescue volunteer since 2017.

Q. What is one thing you want people to know about work being done by your agency, crew, or team?

A. ERVFC is constantly looking for ways to connect with the community. For example, we have a blood drive planned for July 30th, and we are planning to offer CPR and STOP The Bleed classes.

Q. What advice do you have for new recruits/people interested in the fire and EMS industry?

A. For anyone considering volunteering for fire/rescue I would say: You can do it! I started at the age of 56. There are many rewarding roles to fill and your community needs you.

Q. What are three career lessons you've learned thus far?

A. My role as a volunteer has taught me that taking the initiative is a must, but that you also need a lot of help from others to be as good as you want to be. I have also learnt that applying yourself to something new changes you and can lead to new engagement and meaning.

Q. What would surprise people about you if they knew?

A. People are always surprised to hear that my husband and I have raised 6 children.

Q. What is a career goal or ambition you are working towards?

A. I am currently completing Fire Officer 1 and a degree in EMS Management. I would like to participate in a Community Paramedicine Program if one is ever established.

Q. What is something you love – and a few details about why you love it?

A. I do have a passion for travel. I have been very fortunate to explore some parts of Europe, the Far East, Africa, North and South America, as well as the Caribbean. I hope to visit many more countries all over the world to experience the food, the culture, the scenery, the people and the wildlife.

Q. What is something unique about you that other people might not know?

A. Something unique that others do not yet know is that I am partnering with Thin Line Service Dogs and I will soon begin raising a dog for them that will eventually be placed with a disabled first responder or veteran.

Q. What is your life motto/work mantra?

A. Life Motto - I don't know who to attribute this to but: "Life is a gift, and it offers us the privilege, opportunity, and responsibility to give something back by becoming more".

Calls for Service

January 1 - June 4, 2022

EMS	5,225
Fire.....	1,214
HM	272
Rescue	475
Other	23
Grand Total.....	7,209

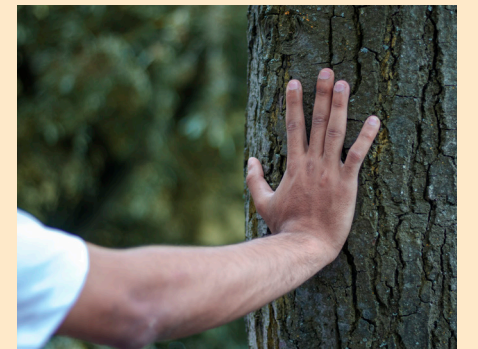
The Trouble Tree

Having the job of a first responder is stressful, and with lack of sleep and long shifts, it's difficult to leave the stress at work. It's no secret that many firefighters deal with issues of chronic stress, anxiety, and sleep disorders. Finding ways to deal with that stress can mean the difference between being healthy—and enjoying a healthy home life—and not.

The ability to unplug after a long shift and connect with family can be difficult. Being exhausted, worn out, and emotionally drained is completely normal. It can be hard to shift gears and connect with those people who are important to you. No matter how chaotic, busy, or frustrating your shift is, when you walk through the door you have to leave the stress at the door. Here are some ways to manage that:

- Stop on the way home. Go grab a cup of coffee if you're planning to stay up for the day. Stop at the gym to blow off steam and work through the stress of the previous day.
- Have a regular weekly appointment with your therapist or Peer Supporter. Having someone to chat with and listen to you vent can really help release your stress, and help you manage it. Managing your stress is the key to prevent build-up.
- Make sure you're doing your best to choose healthy lifestyle choices. Practice good sleep hygiene, exercise, and eat healthy. When you're doing something healthy for your body it can really be a mood booster. Practicing self-care can help you mediate the stresses in your life. Massages, yoga, and meditation are all great examples of self-care.

The last bit of "leave your stress at the door" that I would like to share was a story I was told by an older retired Chief. It's called "The Trouble Tree." Even though he didn't start the story, each day he worked hard to apply it in his own life. Give it a read and apply it to your story. If you don't have a tree, you can choose another object - a mailbox, lawn ornament, or even a box in your garage.



"The Trouble Tree"

The carpenter who was hired to help a man restore an old farmhouse had just finished his first day on the job and everything that could possibly go wrong went wrong. First of all, on his way to work he had a flat tire that cost him an hour's worth of pay, then his electric saw broke, and after work his old pickup truck refused to start.

His new boss volunteered to give him a lift home and the whole way to his house the carpenter sat in stone silence as he stared out his window. Yet on arriving, he invited his boss in for a few minutes to meet his family. As they walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. When he opened the door, he underwent an amazing transformation. His tanned face was one big smile as he hugged his two small children and kissed his wife.

Afterwards, the man walked his boss to his car to say thank you. Now on their way out of the house, the boss' curiosity got the best of him so he had to ask the man about the tree on the front porch. He said, "I noticed when you came up on the porch before going into your house you stopped and touched the tree, why?"

"Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied. "I know I can't stop from having troubles out on the job, but one thing's for sure – my troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and children.

"So, I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home. Then in the morning I pick them up again. Funny thing is," he smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, they aren't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before."

I've Got Your Back

BY JOHN TARAVELLA

A co-worker recently shared a podcast episode with me. The title, 'I have your back.' While it can quickly be dismissed by many as a cute bumper sticker (and one we don't need to spend much time thinking about), the discussion that followed had some excellent points I will carry forward with me for a long, long time.

In this podcast, the host was interviewing a flight paramedic and a flight nurse. I found it very interesting throughout that neither the host, or either of the guests' names were mentioned. For the sake of this article, I'll call the flight paramedic Tom, and the newer flight nurse, Rachel.

The host quickly threw a question at the pair, asking about an early, tough call they ran together. The partner pair described going to a call with a possibility of an advanced airway needing to be utilized. While riding to the call (as many providers often do), Tom asked Rachel about a plan when they got to the scene. He asked her if she wanted to attempt the airway if it was needed after an assessment of the patient. She quickly said that she didn't want the airway.

As we were listening to the podcast while prepping lunch, my partner immediately paused the podcast at that moment. 'Performance anxiety,' he said. Without a doubt, I understood exactly what he was talking about. Rachel was an experienced and competent provider, so it didn't seem like a lack of knowledge was the barrier in not wanting to be responsible for placing the advanced airway if needed.

The host, Tom, and Rachel went on to discuss that Rachel had felt slightly intimidated by Tom, his reputation, and his experience in flying with the air ambulance service. They were both new to each other. She was nervous that she might not be able to be



successful if she was the provider who was charged with placing the advanced airway.

Isn't this often a part of any new EMS partner relationship? I'm glad you asked, because it sure is. In joining any new crew, whether we realize it or not, we are assessing our partner in their strengths, capabilities, and abilities.

After Tom and Rachel were finished discussing this particular call, Tom shared that he felt like it was his fault for not making Rachel comfortable enough to attempt the advanced airway if needed. Tom wanted Rachel to know without a doubt that she could feel comfortable taking a risk without a guaranteed outcome.

Tom shared that he wanted Rachel to know that he had her back. If she got the airway on the first attempt, excellent. The patient had what they needed. If she did not get the airway on the first attempt, Tom had full confidence that he would be able to talk Rachel through the anatomic structures that

she should expect to see in providing an advanced airway for the patient. Tom also knew many tips and tricks through his experience to be able to help her be successful while she remained the primary provider at the patient's airway. This call opened the door between Tom and Rachel to bring them closer together.

What did I take away from this 45-minute lesson? I took away that I need to work to support my team and my teammates. It is important that I use my experience and knowledge to build others up. Using that knowledge and experience to do anything else is a detriment to the team, to the patient, and to our reputation as the fire service. It is important that people feel comfortable coming to me (and you) to ask questions if they don't know an answer. Making a person feel like they are 'less than' is not a work environment that I want to be a part of. I would much rather talk through a scenario while roaming around the station than on a tough call that I am seeing for the very first time during a real-time event.

Everyone, and I mean everyone, has the ability to bring something to the crew in order to strengthen it. You are not just a firefighter. Nobody is just a firefighter. You are somebody's partner. Look for work - on the ambulance during a call or on the engine. What can you be doing to help set everyone up for success? Where is our app showing the closest hydrant? Where is a backup? Are there possible obstructions in the area the Tower Operator should be made aware or reminded of? How many paces away from the building should the tower park so the ladder can swing around completely in all directions? We must be open to others' feedback and we must be ready, willing, and able to share it in a humble way in which it can be received. Building each other up can help us all continue to grow stronger. If you've got some extra time, give it a listen!

The podcast is entitled 'Medic Mindset', episode 'I have your back', hosted by Ginger Locke.

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