

SIRENS



Winter 2023-24

News & Information for Albemarle County Fire Rescue



National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Each April, National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week is recognized across the country, and we want to take a moment to share our appreciation for everything these individuals do. In the realm of public safety, the critical role of telecommunicators is often overlooked. Commonly known as 911 dispatchers, these professionals are the first point of contact in emergencies, serving as the vital link between the public and emergency services. As we recognize their contributions, it becomes evident that telecommunicators are more than just voices on the other end of the line; they are the unseen backbone of emergency response systems.

The job of a telecommunicator goes beyond answering calls. They are masters of multitasking, often handling multiple calls simultaneously, tracking the location and availability of field units, and providing real-time information to responders enroute to an incident. This role demands a unique blend of skills – sharp attention to detail, problem-solving abilities, and above all, emotional resilience. Telecommunicators must maintain composure amidst chaos, providing a calm and authoritative presence to callers in distress.

From instructing a bystander on performing CPR to advising safety measures during a home invasion to helping deliver babies, the guidance they provide in those first crucial minutes is pivotal to the outcome of the call. Telecommunicators are aptly termed the “first, first responders.” They are the initial contact during emergencies, making critical decisions in seconds. Their ability to swiftly gather accurate information, calm the caller, and dispatch the appropriate services can mean the difference between life and death.

In an era where technology is ever advancing, the human element that telecommunicators provide is irreplaceable. They are trained to listen not just to the words of a caller, but to the story behind the words—the tone, the background noise, the unspoken stress—which technology alone cannot decipher. Their empathy and ability to connect on a human level provide solace to callers in their most vulnerable moments. To our colleagues at the Emergency Communications Center, we thank you for your work and dedication to the community we all serve.

NEWS BRIEFS

Recruit School 23 & 24

We are excited to have the opportunity to teach two recruit schools this year, both of which began on Jan.16, 2024.

Recruit School 23 is our accelerated group with four recruits and will graduate on April 10, 2024. These recruits come to us with some experience and are being trained the ACFR Way.

Recruit School 24 has 32 recruits and will graduate June 27, 2024. RS24 recruits will complete the full program including EMT and Firefighter classes.

Calls for Service

January 1 - December 31, 2023

EMS	12,103
Fire.....	3,132
HM	599
Rescue	1,217
Other.....	367
Grand Total.....	17,418



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Letter From the Chief

The fire service landscape is evolving rapidly, demanding not just more personnel, but also greater sophistication in operations and logistics. Recognizing this shift, ACFR has embarked on an exciting journey of growth, expanding its ranks and capabilities to better serve the community.

This growth is evident not only in the number of personnel ACFR has added in recent years, but also in the sophistication of the system. ACFR's Logistics Division recently expanded into the Public Safety Operations Center, which serves both ACPD and ACFR. This facility enhances the Logistics Division's ability to provide System-wide fleet maintenance and a centrally located supply of gear and equipment. Opening the PSOC represents tremendous work and coordination among ACFR, ACPD, and FES.

But growth isn't just about numbers and resources. It's about embracing a culture of continuous improvement. ACFR understands that true service excellence means staying ahead of the curve, investing in training, adopting innovative technologies, and fostering a collaborative environment where all members feel empowered to contribute.

This multifaceted approach to growth ensures ACFR is well-positioned to

meet the evolving needs of our community. With each new member, each enhanced capability, and each instance of collaboration, we build a stronger, more resilient fire department – one that is prepared to face any challenge, head-on.

What does this mean for you, the firefighter? It means you are part of something bigger than yourself, a department that values your contributions and invests in your success. It means access to cutting-edge training, advanced equipment, and a collaborative environment that fosters innovation and growth. It means being part of a team that is making a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

So, join us on this exciting journey as we continue to blaze a new trail for fire service excellence. Together, we will build a department that is not just bigger, but better prepared, more responsive, and more community-focused than ever before.

—Chief Dan Eggleston



Hoagies for Heroes (L-R) Zach Poole, Ari Nathanson, Tate McCracken, Jeriel Samuels, and Eric Opoku

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK 2024: WORD SEARCH

COOKING SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

S F I R W P S R F F Y T E F A S D E B
 H T N F I R S K I T C H E N V C S S C
 O X A X Z E F F R N B S A F Z T M A M
 M N L Y N V I R E B A T T E R Y O E A
 E P P T I E R Y P M R A D E C V T R S
 F S F E M N E T R U S R L N E E H G E
 I E R F P T T N E N O A N N N T E D I
 R L Y A X I T H V R E O O F K B R E R
 E B I S P O U L E B L V I A U E T M E
 S I N G O N I J N K H J T S J E H E T
 P T G N L O U L T A I D U B P P E R T
 R S J I B S 1 S I H U T A A C L F G A
 I U O K T 1 T C O O K I C O N M L E B
 N B R O 9 D V L N G H S O H 9 D A N Y
 K M R O C S O P W R E K 9 1 E T M C J
 L O A C S M O K E A L A R M K N E Y I
 E C E O S T O V E T O P F T I N T W A
 R B D B A K E R K G R I L L I N G E Z
 S P L I O R B B F T U O T E G T S U J

1. Safety
2. Escape
3. Smoke Alarm
5. Home Fire Sprinklers
6. Beep
7. Prevention
8. Caution
10. Fire Prevention Week
11. Smother the Flame
12. Bake
13. Frying
15. Broil
16. Be Alert
17. 911
18. Kitchen
19. Stovetop
20. Oven
21. Grease
22. Emergency
23. Battery
24. Boil
25. Grilling
26. Cook
27. Broil
28. Just Get out
29. Combustibles
30. Stay in the Kitchen

Regional School 2024

Regional School 2024 will take place in mid-March. Lunches will be provided on Saturday and Sunday. We anticipate about 150 participants in this year's Regional School. The courses are listed below:

Course/Event	Location	Date
Rope Ops - Low/High Angle	Station 12: Hollymead Fire Rescue	03/14/24
Truck School	Charlottesville Church of the Brethren	03/15/24
Fire Instructor I	COB-5th Room A	03/16/24
Confined Space Tech	Station 17: Scottsville	03/16/24
DMICO	ACFR HQ - Training Room	03/16/24
Mayday Ops	Seminole Volunteer Fire Dept	03/16/24
STICO	ACFR HQ - Recruit School Training Room	03/16/24
TECC	Station 11: Monticello Fire Rescue	03/16/24



Firefighter Cancer Awareness

Cancer now surpasses heart disease as the leading cause of death among firefighters. Compared to the general population, firefighters are at a higher risk of certain types of cancers. In fact, firefighters have a 9 percent higher risk of a positive diagnosis and a 14 percent higher risk of dying from cancer than the public. At the 2023 IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial, almost 66% of the names added to the wall died from occupational cancer. Seventy two percent of the LODD of IAFF members were from occupational cancer. Keep in mind that these numbers don't include non-union members or volunteers, which would skyrocket these statistics even more. In Canada, close to 94% of line-of-duty deaths among professional firefighters are the result of occupational cancers. Unfortunately, as you read this article, you'll notice few numbers have been collected for volunteers and for women.

Firefighters are exposed to hundreds of not-so-nice chemicals. Some of those chemicals have been labeled as cancer-causing. Whether we encounter those chemicals by ingestion, skin, eye contact, or respiratory, we have to learn how to be proactive about protecting ourselves. Prevention and education are key!

January is Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month

The Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) served up a great deal of that prevention and education we were just talking about. In case you don't know, the Firefighter Cancer Support Network has been supporting cancer-stricken firefighters and their families since 2005 as a non-profit organization. The following statistics and information are provided by the FCSN and are broken down into four easy to read articles with videos and other helpful tools. They have a vision of being the leader in firefighter support, awareness, and education. Each week during the month of January, the FCSN focuses on a theme. Per their website, "by the end of the month, firefighters will have the knowledge and resources to understand how firefighters are exposed to carcinogens, what happens when they are exposed, how to prevent exposures, make culture changes in their department, and assist those who are diagnosed with cancer."

While the month of January has come and gone, the information hasn't. We encourage everyone to **visit their website url here?** or social media to learn more about this important topic.

Week 1: Best Practices to Reduce Cancer at the Fire Station

Week 2: Best Practices to Reduce Cancer on the Fireground

Week 3: Best Practices to Reduce Cancer Off Duty/Personal Life

Week 4: Survivorship and Cancer Prevention in Action

Looking for a few more ways to help with cancer research and prevention?

In 2018, Congress passed the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act. The National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) created a registry to study cancer among firefighters and to collect more data and statistics for minorities, women, volunteers, and wildland firefighters where numbers are lacking.

Who can join? Literally any firefighter or form of

- Active, former, and retired firefighters
- Career, paid-on-call, and volunteer firefighters
- Structural firefighters
- Wildland firefighters
- Industrial firefighters
- Military firefighters
- Instructors
- Fire investigators

If you're interested in doing some more research for yourself, please follow the QR code listed below. You will also see a QR code for the cancer registry portal. Please consider taking the time to educate yourself about the risks of firefighter-related cancer. Let's all be proactive about our overall health and take care of ourselves and each other. Stay safe, friends.



2023 Holiday Recap

Submitted by Gilbert Monroe

The crews at Hollymead Station teamed up with Santa Claus to spread some holiday cheer. Vehicles played festive music while Santa waved from atop the fire truck while cruising through multiple neighborhoods across on three different days.

To see the photos go to photos.app.goo.gl/ZYHG1GFHfZUtCo8p7

New this year, we started a friendly competition among all the stations with a holiday light decorating contest. With nearly 5,500 votes, Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department won with 56% of the votes. Thank you to all the departments and members who made this contest possible. Who is going to win 2024?



On December 3, 2023, the Crozet Volunteer Fire Department celebrated the holiday season with its annual Christmas parade and station open house. Following the parade CVFD hosted the community at its station to meet Santa, explore its apparatus, and enjoy food served off the grill by CVFD members. The open house had a number of activities for children and families such as an arts crafts area, hose and water target, and bounce house along with several community vendors. The occasion was a chance for CVFD to help strengthen community bonds and offer an opportunity for residents to connect with their local firefighters.



Releases

- Adhivaka Ambikapathi Revathi BLS
- Kaley Dawson BLS
- Sarah Roberts BLS
- Charlotte Zhang..... BLS
- Jenny Zhang..... BLS

Welcome

Recruit School 23

- David Millhouse
- Nathaniel Chiarappa
- Ryan Haakenson
- Nick Ludwig

Recruit School 24

- Austin Batten
- Cameron Gray
- Colin McCauley
- Devon Grimes
- Ethan Rose
- Ian Haney
- Isaac Campbell
- Jacob Jordan
- Jacob Palmore
- John Edwards
- Jordan Dickerson
- Jordan Parrott
- Jordan Trader
- Joseph Melton
- Kara Cacioppo
- Katelyn Yancey
- Kevin Boyer
- Marquis Lee
- Michael Biesemier
- Natasha Snodgrass
- Mark Mancini
- Phillip Paul
- Robert Kluba
- Ryan Erbe
- Sam Scholz
- Samantha Chasse
- Scott Johnston
- Sean Durando
- Terrence Jordan
- Thomas Brunelle
- Zachary Binder



Volunteer



Todd Richardson
Chief, Earlysville Volunteer Fire Company
Senior FOIA Specialist, ECC

Q. How did you get started in volunteer fire rescue?

A. I started as a Junior member with Scottsville in the mid-80's, where my father was an officer. I was going to school and working at the same time, but I enjoyed the excitement of running calls.

Q. What have been your most useful experiences/training?

A. I took FF1 at 18 and the skills I learned have stayed with me to this day. I was initially a fire-only guy, but I took EMT, which has come in handy on a personal level a few times, the biggest of which was delivering my youngest child on the side of the road! All training is useful, and every class I have ever taken has been valuable in its own way. Never quit learning!

Q. How did your volunteer experiences help you with your job at ECC?

A. Experience in the field heightened my empathy towards others and prepared me to deal with stressful situations and working with people who are having one of the worst days of their lives. You get a bit of verbal abuse, but you have to let that roll. Once ECC took on fire dispatch in 2004, my experience helped me anticipate what crews and equipment may be needed on the fire ground. There are still a few people that used to call me "Radio"...although, I hope this isn't a reference to the Cuba Gooding Jr. movie!

Q. What skills do you need to be a good 911 responder?

A. Observe and be prepared. Don't get tunnel vision and don't expect the scene to be as described in dispatch. Expect the unexpected and look out for your people. Scenes change constantly - whether it's an accident on 29, a brush fire with shifting winds, or a structure fire where conditions can change in an instant. Even a mundane EMS call can change in a heartbeat if a family member becomes upset.

We need to look beyond the physical and pay attention to the mental aspect of what we do. We all see some awful stuff - if it affects you, don't be afraid to talk to someone; don't internalize and think it will go away over time. And if you see someone else is impacted, get them help! If we don't look out for each other, who will?

Q. How has your experience helped you to be a chief?

A. I have served in three different volunteer departments in Albemarle and had the good fortune to learn a lot from many different great leaders. In my nine years as Chief at Earlysville, I've learned you need to be a parent, teacher, diplomat, referee, politician, and disciplinarian when the time comes; but, most of all, you've got to be yourself. When it comes to being Chief, the best things to do are listen, be diplomatic, lead when you need to lead, and be your own advocate. Remember that just because you are the leader doesn't mean you always have to lead. Lead by example and when it is needed, but you need to give others an opportunity to shine!

Q. What does the future hold?

A. EVFC has seen an upswing in recruitment as we have tapped into UVA as a re-

source, but this has brought new challenges with the size of our current building. We have been trying for years to secure funding to renovate our career and volunteer quarters, which have not been updated since they were built in the early 80's. I hope that in the near future we can modernize the building to make it more comfortable for current members and to entice others to join. As for me, I feel I have several years left in me and I want to continue serving my community as long as I am physically able to.

Career



Celeste Baldino
Deputy Director of Operations, ECC

Q. How did you get started at ECC?

A. My mom jokes that I teethed on a firetruck bumper. My great-grandpa, grandpa, dad, mom, aunt, and uncle all volunteered with fire & rescue in Botetourt, where I grew up. As soon as I was old enough, I followed in their footsteps, became an EMT and FF at 16, and then worked my way up to Shock Trauma & Cardiac Tech and Captain. After college, I took a dispatch job at Roanoke County PD until I figured out what I wanted to do, not knowing I had already found it! In 2001, I came to Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle ECC as a Public Safety Communications Officer (PSCO). I also continued my volunteer

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service with Crozet Fire Department, where I am now a life member, and Western Albemarle Rescue Squad. I'm now Deputy Director of Operations, meaning I have oversight over not only ECC's daily operations, but also everything from special event planning to professional development training, peer support, and FOIA requests. I miss the "hands-on" role and being on the radio, especially when it's busy or during major events. My new position is flexible, but it's mainly in daylight and I'm not a morning person, so I also miss my night shifts!

Q. What are the most challenging aspects of your work?

A. PSCOs have to remain calm under pressure, communicate effectively, use active listening and critical thinking, multitask, and have empathy - all while paying attention to details and managing stress. The daily challenges they face include:

- High stress levels as they're the first point of contact for people facing emergencies. The ability to remain calm under pressure is crucial. Handling back-to-back emotionally charged calls without downtime to process can have an emotional toll. Many first responders see the resolution of an event,

but PSCOs often don't learn the outcomes, which can be emotionally challenging.

- PSCOs juggle multiple tasks simultaneously - call taking, providing life safety instructions, coordinating emergency responders, and entering information into CAD - while making decisions quickly and accurately based on limited information. These decisions can have significant consequences for the safety and well-being of the public and responders. Also, continuously changing technology, protocols, and policies all require ongoing training.
- PSCOs typically work in a confined space with limited social interaction, which can lead to feelings of isolation, especially when dealing with difficult situations. This is why the health and wellbeing of our coworkers is a top priority.
- Although PSCOs play a critical role in emergency response, the work they do is often behind the scenes. They routinely do not receive the same recognition as first responders despite being the "first, first responder" and the crucial nature of their contributions.

All that being said, most PSCOs find the job rewarding, knowing that their efforts directly contribute to saving lives and helping people

in times of crisis as well as the sense of accomplishment knowing that all emergency responders go home at the end of their shifts.

Q. Tell us about your charity work with Dogs Deserve Better?

A. I have always loved animals, especially dogs. When I got together with my husband, we had four dogs between us. In late 2018, he showed me a Dogs Deserve Better Blue Ridge post on Facebook about a dog called Chop; I applied to volunteer and within days we had our first foster dog. Since then, we have fostered many dogs, done cold call days, field days, and built pens; we also adopted Chop, the dog who drew us to DDB in the first place. I am now the medical coordinator, setting up all vet appointments for all the dogs in our care and client dogs that we help with vaccines and spay/neuter. Volunteering in some way or another has always been part of my life, and being a voice for animals that aren't able to advocate for themselves makes it all worth it to me. Plus, dogs are the best therapy! There are many similarities between this role and my day job. In the field, we could be dealing with those having a crisis and the ability to stay calm and communicate effectively really helps us help the dogs in the best way possible.

Hazmat Training



HazMat Technician course in Anniston, AL at the Center for Domestic Preparedness. (L-R) Battalion Chief Meade Whitaker, FF Gabriel Gallarzo-Flores, FF Justin Lloyd, FF Ben Jordan, FF Tanner Amburgey, FF Sean Watson, FF Damian Scott



