



**Chief's Corner**  
**Surviving Snow-Zilla 2016**

Hello everyone, and welcome to the February edition of the Chief's Corner. I hope you are all doing well and preparing for the next big weather event that we are likely to have.

Speaking of weather, this month I would like to discuss the recent snow event and how the Fire Department prepared for and "survived" Snow-Zilla. Now, I know that we are not strangers to snow, but this event was a little different and there are some lessons to be learned here. Let's take a look, shall we?

Starting early in the week, before the snow arrived, the weather reports were all predicting we were in for a major snow and the consensus was that it was going to get deep. The temperatures were going to be very cold and all of this was going to make driving dangerous. As the week went on, the forecasts became even more ominous with some calling for over two feet of snow. Looking at the potential for serious weather, the City and the Fire Department started to make some plans and preparations. Certainly, we have had deep snow and cold weather before and the department did well under those circumstances; however, we had not seen a forecast like this for many years. We just wanted to be sure that we were as ready as we could be.

The department began to make the usual preparations of checking tire chains and fueling all of the stand-by generators, as well as putting some more "aggressive tires" on several important response vehicles. We also checked the on-spot chains and the shop prepared the pickups with the plows. By Thursday we were as ready for the snow as we could be and were just waiting for the "blizzard" to begin. (Also on Thursday afternoon the City Manager made the decision to close City offices on Friday and all non-essential personnel would take a day of leave.) As darkness settled in on Thursday evening, everyone was waiting to see what Friday morning would bring.

On Friday morning the snow began to fall around 0700 hours, as predicted, and the cold temperatures ensured that it was sticking right away. Snow continued to fall throughout the day and it started to get deep by evening. That night, as it continued to snow, we had several working fires and the weather presented challenges to the responding crews. However, as expected, the Fire Department performed its duties at the highest level. The fires were extinguished and the citizens were taken care of. The medic units were busy as well, answering all the calls for service and transporting patients despite the conditions. The Battalion Chiefs did a good job of reducing responding equipment when it wasn't necessary. Also, using our four-wheel drive units to help

reach patients and bring them to a medic unit worked very well. We only had a few units get "stuck" and we were able to dig them out ourselves.

As the snow continued to fall on Saturday morning, the department adapted to the conditions and provided the excellent service for which we are known. We were able to answer all calls we received and did so safely. By Saturday evening the snowfall slowed, then stopped and we didn't get the two feet predicted. However, we did receive over a foot of snow and continued to operate as usual. We had planned and prepared for the event and "weathered" (pun intended) it quite well. As Col. Hannibal Smith of the "A" Team would say, "I love it when a plan comes together."

(As an aside, I wanted to mention that the department received numerous e-mails and phone calls from citizens thanking us for the outstanding service we provided during the snow storm. I think that speaks well for the Lynchburg Fire Department and the work we are doing.)

Before closing this month I wanted to give a "shout-out" to the Public Works Department and thank them for their efforts in keeping the streets clear and passable. These guys and gals worked around the clock and did a great job. They assisted us whenever we needed help and I appreciate that. They have a plan and "work it," all the while having a good attitude.

Well, that does it for this month's Chief's Corner. Here's hoping we don't have any additional major snow events this winter and we can all start looking forward to spring and warmer weather. But, if we do have another "Snow-zilla," I'm sure we will survive that one as well.

I want to thank everyone for their dedication and hard work during the storm and I hope you were able to have some fun outdoor activities. Winter can be a great season if you are prepared and venture out. Stay warm and take care: spring will be here before you know it.

Be careful out there and stay safe, but never forget the most important rule: Everyone goes home safe at the end of the shift!"

Chief



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## 60 Second Safety

By: Captain Tom McCrickard

### Cold and Inclement Weather Safety



The unusually warm temperatures have definitely left and winter has arrived with a vengeance. With the falling temperatures also comes the chance of snow and ice. In fact, as I type this, most of you have been out in the recent "big" snow running calls.

We all need to be aware that slips, trips, and falls obviously increase with the snow and ice. Our normal tasks may also take longer working in snow and ice, and may require more assistance than normal.

While most of the main roads are clear, many of the secondary and residential streets are still covered. Be mindful of the weather and road conditions and adjust your response accordingly. If you are using tire chains or drop chains, slow your speed and be mindful of the guidelines for using chains. Constantly check them, and if one breaks, remove it immediately and keep going, if possible.

Take care of yourself, each other, and the citizens we serve. It is an excellent idea to maintain extra uniforms at work. It's one thing to be cold, but it is worse to be wet and cold. Hypothermia can set in much quicker when your skin is wet. Make sure to dress in layers which will keep you warmer. Remember, it is still important to hydrate during cold weather. Most only think about this when it is hot, but your body can still become dehydrated in cold weather.

Lastly, be mindful of the citizens we serve. During calls for service, such as medical calls, motor vehicle crashes, and structure fires, make sure we address their needs and keep them warm. Be Safe!

## Certifications

### Fire Inspector I/II

John Norman

### Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

Ryan Lee

### Fire Investigator "In Service" Training

Scott Hudson

### NFA – Incident Safety Officer

Travis Calloway  
Ronald Coleman

Wayne Casto  
Scott Hudson

## Lynchburg Progressive Firefighters Association Sponsors EMT Class

By: Firefighter Moe Bruce

The Lynchburg Progressive Firefighters Association (LPFA) EMT course is in its third month and is going well. When the course was advertised in October 2015, there was a big response from the public interested in the emergency medical services profession. The class was filled within the first two weeks of advertisement with 90 percent of the students enrolled residing within the City of Lynchburg.



EMT Class Students

Classes are now underway and are being held in the Fire Administration Training Classroom every Tuesday and Thursday night from 6:00-10:00. Paramedic Maurice (Moe) Bruce is the course coordinator, along with a team of experienced EMT instructors which include Paramedic Todd Davis, Paramedic Trina Smith, and Paramedic Ricky Bomar.

Students are scheduled to take their state practical psychomotor exam on April 9, 2016. If successful, participants will be eligible to take the National Registry EMT Certification Exam.

## Fire Department I.T. Support Staff

Ryan Ferris has now been assigned to the Fire Department to provide PC support and analysis. Ryan graduated from Virginia Tech in 2005 with a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies. He has worked for the City for over seven years. Please help welcome Ryan as he transitions into this role beginning February 1, 2016.



Ryan Ferris

Mike Hyland, who provided IT support to the Fire Department, will rotate to support City Hall, adding to his knowledge base and skill sets.

By utilizing periodic staff rotations, the Information Technology Department staff can be cross-trained to provide additional resources. With additional familiarity of Fire Department computers and applications, more IT analysts can provide specific departmental support when needed.

Members are also encouraged to use the online HelpDesk self-service system where you can input your requests or call the HelpDesk for emergencies at 401-HELP (4357).

## Fire Apparatus Access Roads

By: Thomas Goode, Fire Marshal

A Fire Apparatus Access Road is defined as a road that provides access from a fire station to a facility, building, or portion thereof. This is a general term inclusive of all other terms such as fire lane (which is not intended for vehicular use other than fire apparatus), public street, private street, a parking lot lane, and an access roadway.

The International Fire Code identifies specific minimum standards for the construction of fire apparatus access in Chapter 5 and Appendix D. There are specifications; however, here are a few immediate examples of a fire apparatus access road:

- Fire apparatus access road shall extend to within 150 feet of all portions of a building and facility
- Dimensions of not less than 20 feet wide, unobstructed vertical of not less than 13 feet, 6 inches
- Capable of supporting the imposed load of fire apparatus weighing at least 75,000 pounds (as the years progress, the weight may increase pending jurisdictions)
- Grades shall not exceed 10 percent, if so, it must be approved

This shall be maintained at all times! If you have questions or need more details, please feel free to contact me.

## Congratulations

Congratulations to Aaron Reeves and his wife on the birth of their son, Preston Kelly "Keeton." He was born January 27, 2016.

### Reminder

City offices will be closed February 15<sup>th</sup> in observance of Presidents' Day.

## Focusing on Innovation and Continuous Improvement

By: Deputy Chief Jason Campbell

If you have not read my article in this newsletter about shifting focus to workplace excellence, please read that article on page 4 (especially Strategy 5) before reading this article.

At the end of January, the department kicked off an effort that will lead us through the department's re-accreditation process, improve our insurance rating through the Insurance Services Organization (ISO), and revise our strategic plan. Although there are three separate processes occurring nearly simultaneously, this is an effort to focus on innovation and continuously improve the department, the services we provide, and the community we serve.

The department is entering its tenth year as an agency accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. When the department became an accredited agency in 2006, it was 1 of 133 fire departments in the world to earn such distinction. Today, there are only 217 fire departments in the world that are accredited and only 10 in Virginia. To put that into perspective, there are 33,000 fire departments in the United States alone. As one of the original accreditation managers from the onset, I can identify one of our shortfalls as making sure that accreditation is a process, not a project. As a process, we should utilize the accreditation model and the self-assessment document that we have spent many hours compiling as a desktop reference on a daily basis. Daily! And our

strategic plan should be utilized as a daily management tool, as this represents our "big picture." Utilized effectively, this process will guide our innovation and continuous improvement.

I'm a very visual person, although I eventually enjoy looking at the details. So, I created a visual aid to assist me and everyone else in seeing the relationship between all of our organizational documents. This assists us in understanding where information is derived from, what helps us make decisions, and what can drive the public policy debate, as it relates to our day-to-day operation. All of these documents will also drive us to seek out innovative ways to drive workplace excellence and continuous improvement of the Fire Department.

If you are interested in serving in any areas of the accreditation or strategic planning processes, please reach out to me. There are a lot of opportunities to be involved and the team continues to grow nearly everyday.



## Members Begin National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program

By: Battalion Chief Jonathan Wright

Congratulations to Captains Abbey Johnston and Matt Millner, who were accepted into the National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program.

The National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program is a two-year curriculum that introduces emerging emergency services leaders to personal and professional skills in change management, risk reduction, and adaptive leadership. The program includes all four elements of professional development: education, training, experience, and continuing education.

Captains Johnston and Millner began the Managing Officer Program in January 2016 and completed their first two-week session at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.



Captain  
Abbey Johnston



Captain  
Matt Millner

## Training Division News

By: Battalion Chief Jonathan Wright

I would like to thank the many members who have helped ease my transition to the Training Division. As I write this article, there are many exciting training opportunities planned in the near future. I would like to highlight a few of those training events:

### Officer Development Seminars

Scheduled for February 22 (Chiefs and Captains) and February 23 (Master Firefighters) at the Information Technology building, these one-day sessions are packed with outstanding presentations and will provide a wide range of material.

### Mental Health Fitness Classes

Captain Johnston will lead impactful Mental Health Fitness classes this month that will generate discussions about this important topic.

### Traffic Incident Management Safety (TIMS) Course

Captain Coleman is working to finalize details on a course to be presented in Lynchburg. This class will involve the Police Department, tow truck drivers, and fire service to help understand what everyone's responsibility is at the scene on the highway.

## Shifting Focus From Employee Engagement to Workplace Excellence (Part 3)

By: Deputy Chief Jason Campbell

In November and December I shared four of the eight strategies to workplace excellence, based upon a report by Peter Barron Stark Companies. The first four strategies were (1) a compelling positive vision and clear goals, (2) communicating the right information at the right time, (3) hiring the right employees and managers, and (4) making accountability count. This month I would like to wrap up this series with the final four strategies to assist us in achieving workplace excellence.

### Strategy 5: Cool Stuff: Focus on Innovation and Continuous Improvement

One of the most exciting reasons for me to travel to professional conferences and seminars and to constantly read about our industry and my job-related functions is because of all of the cool stuff that I see other people working on and thinking about how we can make it work here within our organization, when it is appropriate. I say "when it is appropriate" because I try to figure out if the cool stuff is an opportunity to make a difference in our service delivery to the citizens or how positively it will impact our members. This helps in making sure I don't jump on all of the passing fads within the industry.

However, when we look at all of the cool stuff, it means focusing on innovation, continuous improvement, solving problems, learning, growing, and changing. It means we need to cultivate an environment where we are encouraged to improve quality within the organization. We must also be mindful that we are motivated to improve quality and come up with innovative ideas when we are appreciated and recognized for our contributions.

Working on new initiatives and projects allows us to learn, grow, and improve our own skills sets. And when we include learning opportunities in our culture we will set ourselves up on a path to workplace excellence, continuing to attract the highest caliber of talented and engaged members.

### Strategy 6: We are One Team

When it comes to organizational success, individuals cannot win without a team, and teams cannot win without the contributions of individuals. And to consistently win, we need both great players and great teamwork. To achieve this, each member of the team must take responsibility, be accountable, and produce extraordinary results so the team can achieve its goals. And it's up to the leadership within the team to understand that getting everyone on the team to row in the same direction is critical to achieving workplace excellence.

### Strategy 7: Celebrate: Recognize and Reward the Highest Achievers

Most organizations – government, business, non-profits – will often say, "Our people are our most important asset." I'm probably going to get myself in trouble in this next paragraph, but here we go. I would ask you to think about our department and the larger City organization, as a whole, when you read these questions. Do we: (1) Reward mediocre members of our team, poor performers, or those who do not take the initiative to improve quality (including the quality of their own skills and abilities); (2) Distribute bonuses solely based on the number of years of service to our organization?; and (3) Give everyone on the team the same percentage of annual salary increase, regardless of performance? Did you answer "yes" to any of those questions? Sure we did, which means we have some work to do.

We are part of a society where everyone wins a trophy. When every member of the team receives the same reward, or when the rewards are not linked directly to performance and results, it is almost guaranteed to result in lower morale. When organizations appropriately reward and publicly recognize high performance, members of the team feel appreciated. And when members truly feel valued and appreciated, they usually want to stay and continue to share their talents.

### Strategy 8: The Loyalty Connection: Trust, Genuine Care, and Respect

Developing workplace excellence requires a foundation of trust and respect between team members, and between members and leadership. In order for us to achieve this, our members and leaders must communicate openly and honestly, actively seek out the members' thoughts and opinions on how to improve the organization, follow through on what we say we will do, and ensure the accessibility of leadership. These five responsibilities are the measure of trust and respect and are the keys of loyalty to the organization.

It's easy to demonstrate trust and respect when we value the opinions of our members, genuinely care about each other's success and are committed to creating an environment of workplace excellence. This results in members who are connected to the organization with both the head and the heart.

### Conclusion

The eight proven strategies to workplace excellence give organizations a distinct advantage in whatever services they deliver. Each strategy to workplace excellence is under the direct control of a member's immediate supervisor, but can also be achieved through personal responsibility of individual members. That means you – and the members the supervisors coach – can change the way you lead to improve performance through workplace excellence. When we get more out of our jobs, then we also give more back to the organization.

