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# TRUMPET

A PUBLICATION OF THE MOBILE FIRE-RESCUE DEPARTMENT- ESTABLISHED 1888

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*"Quality Professional Services Delivered with Compassion"*

# TRUMPET

An official publication of the Mobile Fire-Rescue Department.  
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Editor & Publisher  
**Steve Huffman**

The Trumpet welcomes your questions and/or comments. To submit photos, articles or comments call (251) 208-2857 or e-mail: [huffman@cityofmobile.org](mailto:huffman@cityofmobile.org)

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## Our Mission

The Mission of the Mobile Fire - Rescue Department is to identify and respond to community needs in order to deliver an effective and efficient system of service which minimize risk to life, health, and property from fire, trauma, acute illness, and hazardous conditions.



**On the Cover**  
Mutual Aid Second Alarm fire in Prichard on Wilson Avenue at Sawyer Furniture January 27, 2010.

**Cover Photo By: Steve Huffman**

**Visit Our Website:**  
<http://www.cityofmobile.org/fire/>



## You are making a difference

**By MELVIN STRINGFELLOW,**  
District Chief

Many years ago, when I was a private on Engine 18, we made a call involving a head on collision on Moffett Road. When we arrived there was a woman lying in the street, dead. She had been thrown through the front windshield. There were two more dead in the vehicle where she had been a passenger. In the other car there was a husband and wife with an infant child. The paramedics that were already on scene quickly transported the baby and additional resources were called. We had to extricate the husband and wife from the vehicle and to say they were both fighting for their lives would be an understatement.

## Why are Firefighters so universally valued?

Imagine for a moment, a world where a customer can pick up a phone, dial three simple numbers and instantly be connected to a human, make an urgent request for service and in less than six minutes have over a million dollars of resources and a dozen experts in their field, arrive at their door with a simple question, "What can we do for you today?"

That's what happens every day with the American fire service. Sound absurd?

Here is a fun exercise to try then. Go to your computer and Google "Fortune 100 Companies."

Pick the top three off the list, find their main phone number, look at a clock and give them a call. Time how long it actually takes to talk to a human. I will bet it takes more than six minutes.

As we are too aware, today our typical experience anytime we call a business is to spend an annoying amount of time on the phone going through automated voice menus and push-another-number frustration, even when we are

Nearly fifteen years later I ran into the driver of that vehicle at the barbershop. We got to talking and one thing led to another and we discovered that our paths had crossed all those years ago. He began to tell me how blessed his family was to have us (MFRD) there that day and he knew our efforts save his family life. Not long after that his daughter, now a beautiful sixteen year old girl, came back to pick up her Dad. He introduced us, we exchanged pleasantries and she was ready to go. Her Dad shook my hand and thanked me again for a job well done and they left.

That chance meeting has been several years ago now, but I still take pride in the fact that I played a role in saving a family from a tragic end. Better yet, that our efforts that day was recognized and appreciated. I understand that many of you feel that your hard work and effort goes unnoticed. That even when you do an excellent job it is under appreciated. Take heart in knowing that even when our customers don't have the opportunity to say it, most all of them have a special place in their hearts for what we have done and continue to do for their families and this community.

are trying to buy a product or service. I recently tried this with a local utility to get service connected. Frustration was a mild word to use in this case.

Another case that I have heard of is an airlines who actually charges an additional fee if you want to talk to a human to complete an airfare transaction.

In today's world of Internet self-service, voice navigation systems and "I'm sorry, I will be out of the office until 2012" auto e-mail replies, it is becoming difficult to feel like we are anything more than a consumer statistic in an increasingly impersonal world.

Think about it. When one of our customers pick up the phone and dial 9-1-1, odds are they are about to receive a visit from a host of complete strangers all who have one single-minded purpose driving them – helping the person(s) in need.

Is there any other business model on the planet where you can expect the same level of service? The challenge is find one Fortune 100 company that can make the same service commitment.

Now that is all about the service

Please see **VALUED** Page 7



## Good leadership behaviors:

Taking the lyrics of a song by The Fray, “sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same”. Although it probably wasn’t the intent of the artist when they composed that lyric, the line in the song could be translated into what it takes to be a good leader and a good follower in the fire service.

The content of this article is not based on any scientific studies, experiments, or research. This article is based solely on someone’s personal observations, experience, and opinions. So if you go and grab your favorite leadership reference text or personal development leadership book, it will probably provide a whole bunch of other ideas, theories, and philosophies that may not be consistent with these views.

This article is not about leadership theory. It is an opinion, what behavior a good leader or a good follower should exhibit. How should they (we) act. This article provides a simple “street view” perspective of leadership in the fire service.

First of all, everyone in the organization is, or should be, a leader and also a follower. At different times we all play different roles in our professional and social interactions. So please don’t take this as the leadership is for the “officers” and the followership is for the “non-officers”. Everyday we are all faced with having to be good at both roles.

I would propose that if we all tried to practice the following behaviors as often as we can, we would all be more productive and satisfied in the performance of our mission and the personal value we give to and receive from the organization. In this issue we will deal with Leadership, next issue will be about Followership.

- Listen.
- Be decisive, after considering the alternatives and inputs/suggestions.
- Have an organizational scope and take ownership beyond your specific assignment – do what is right for the organization.
- Lead by example – you have heard of “dance like no one is watching”, well, “lead like everyone is watching”.
- Do the right thing, every time, not just when it is convenient or beneficial for you.

- If you see something wrong, fix it.
- If you see something right, replicate it.
- Don’t whine or complain: offer constructive and well thought out suggestions for improvement – offer a solution not just identify a problem.
- Respect and follow the chain-of-command (up and down).
- Your goal should be the betterment of the organization not yourself – your rewards will come by being a good leader – you don’t have to seek them out.
- Be sincerely appreciative of people’s efforts and accomplishments and tell them so – a simple “thank you” or “I appreciate that” goes a long way when it is received as being sincere.
- When folks let you down, it is your responsibility to let them know – it is also your responsibility to let them know what your expectations of good performance/behavior are.
- I am sure you have heard: praise in public and punish/council in private – and do it in a timely manner.
- Although we would all like to become and remain friends, we each have jobs and roles to perform and we need to keep in mind that decisions and actions need to be based upon the needs of the organization – sometimes we need to set our personal relationships aside to make the right decisions or take the right actions.
- Many of us would prefer to avoid conflict, but a good leader will find a way to step-up to a problem and fix it without creating unnecessary conflict – professional interaction with mutual respect and a clear understanding of the expectations is key.
- Be fair.
- Be consistent but not consistently wrong – don’t keep demonstrating poor leadership for the sake of consistency – if something needs to change then change it.
- Have an open mind to the ideas and needs of others (there’s that listening thing again).
- Be willing to change and be flexible. Be willing to “agree to disagree” but then enthusiastically support the decision – don’t undermine the implementation of the decision or the decision maker.
- Know the rules (OGs) and follow them – let people catch you following the rules.
- Wear all your PPE, drive safely, remain calm, take charge of your crew/assignment, give clear and concise orders, make sure we do quality work in a safe manner.
- Demonstrate pride in our organization and the job we perform – every time we perform it.
- Don’t cut corners – do it right even if it means it’s going to take longer or be harder.
- Do the whole job, not just the exciting parts or parts that are easy for you – this may include the mundane administrative tasks or paperwork aspects.
- Talk to your people – get to know them and they of you.
- Be responsible for your people’s safety.
- Be responsible for your people’s performance.
- Be responsible for your people’s development.
- Be responsible for your people’s attitude.
- Don’t talk behind people’s back – if there is an issue that is important enough to comment on, then address it with them directly – otherwise, shut-up.
- Be willing to do what you ask others to do – none of us are too important to not be willing to do anything we ask others to do.
- Respect the opinions of others and give them an opportunity to express them – actually consider their input (again that means you have to listen) and then make your informed decision.
- Be respectful of people’s time and show your commitment by showing up yourself. “Do as I say, not as I do” can be a counterproductive behavior as a leader if it is practiced or observed too often.
- As the leader, you don’t have to have all the answers, you don’t have to be the smartest or the prettiest but you do have to be responsible that the job gets done correctly and safely – rely on the strength and diversity of the team to accomplish the task or mission – don’t try and bluff or bully your way through it by yourself – if you need help, don’t be afraid to ask for it and use your team resources – they want to help and will probably do a better job of it.
- Let your people stretch themselves and don’t penalize them for trying a stretch – encourage them to stretch - support them and help them develop – be their safety net – be their mentor – be their coach – don’t be their mother.
- Understand that respect is earned not pinned.

As previously stated Followership Behaviors will be explored in the next issue of the newsletter.



## LUCKY 13

By **JOHN OLSZEWSKI**,  
City Real Estate Department

Yes, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> is John Olszewski's lucky day, and he knows it.

John who works in the City's Real Estate Department is the winner of the 4-day cruise on Carnival's Fantasy. Or, should I say John's wife Teresa is the big winner.

You see, John felt lucky when he heard that the Fire Department was holding a raffle with a Grand Prize of a cruise and that the drawing was going to take place on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. So he called Edna Brown of Fire Supply and said he had to have tickets because Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> is his lucky day. Edna said sure and said she would bring him 4 chances to win.

When Edna arrived with the tickets, John told her his story of the Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. You see John met his wife, Teresa,

on the 13<sup>th</sup>, they got married on Friday October 13<sup>th</sup>, and now the drawing was going to be on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. As Edna collected the ticket money and started to leave, she turned and said, "I know you are going to win."

When Edna called the next day with the news, John, who was in disbelief, said it was a joke. When John joined the group of Fire Department employees at the drawing site, he still was in shock, but began to believe it.

When they asked what he was going to do with the prize he said, "Surprise my wife on Christmas Eve with the cruise." So everyone said they would help keep the secret and John started off to plan a cruise in secret. First he contacted 2 close friends and asked them to join him and Teresa on the cruise. Then they swore to secrecy and started planning.

Next, he called Sheila Gurganus at the cruise terminal and asked for help to get a model of Fantasy to use on in Teresa's present. Sheila came through with a small model of Fantasy from the ship's gift shop.

John spent the next few weeks planning, coordinating, and keeping the secret from Teresa. And boy was that hard to do!

The friends had made their plans and John had finished up with his. The model of the Fantasy was all wrapped up in a gift bag and sitting under the Christmas tree. Teresa still had no idea what was in this bag that weighed next to nothing.

On Christmas Eve, Teresa opened her other presents, but John kept the "special gift" for last. Teresa still had no clue what her present was when she pulled the tissue wrapped model ship out of the bag and started unwrapping it. She actually thought it might be a new cell phone. Finally, the last of the paper came off. Teresa stared in disbelief and said, "What... Am I going on a cruise?"

Yes, the surprise worked, and on March 4<sup>th</sup> John, Teresa, and friends are departing for Cozumel thanks to Mobile Fire-Rescue Department.

## What do those Staffers do anyway?

By **KEN KELLER**,  
Captain

I remember when I was promoted to Captain two years ago. I had been in the field for eight years and really had no concept of what staff personnel (staffers we called them) actually did. Sitting around the table of knowledge in the morning at the fire station while drinking coffee, I would listen to the fire house lawyers tell tales of what they heard about these staffers. They would tell amazing stories of how these creatures of habit knew exactly where the best lunch buffets were located, and how they had the uncanny ability to disappear in a moment's notice after lunch on Friday afternoons. Laziness was a reoccurring theme along with some other excerpts I would rather not mention. "I will never be one of these staffers" I told myself.

My first day at the training academy made me realize the ugly truth that I was now a staffer. What I would soon realize was that these staffers were not the creatures I thought them to be.

Though they did know where the best lunch buffets were located, these people actually had specific roles in the fire service. EMS billing and run review, public safety education, media relations, special events coordination, office assistants, administration/financing, training, code enforcement, investigation, equipment maintenance, departmental supplies, communications, homeland security and Gary Smith. All of these people work hard in their respective area to help compliment those of us making the calls.

I know the day will come when I will be back in the field making runs, and though I will never own a sweatshirt that says staffer I have a greater appreciation for the contributions of everyone in the MFRD.

P.S. If you need me I will be in my office taking a nap...

Take the attitude of a student, never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new.

- Og Mandino (1923-1996)



**Mutual Aid-2nd Alarm Fire in  
Prichard on Wilson Avenue at  
Sawyer Furniture  
January 27, 2010**





# Firefighter Safety

## Cancer Awareness

**By Mary Valance RN, MSN, MICN—**  
Valance is an EMS educator for the Los Angeles County Fire Department. In 2007, she conducted an extensive review of smoke toxin research and developed a firefighter inhalation injury awareness program that has been presented at fire departments, medical centers and industry conferences. She is a proud member of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network.



### Case Study: Report No. 09-857

“Upon arrival, crews found a motor home with a large adjacent shed heavily involved. Once the fire was knocked down, overhaul began—without SCBA masks. Crews adjusted their positions when winds shifted and generally stayed out of the smoke. The wind direction was unpredictable though, and they occasionally were in smoke for a few seconds before it got clear. One firefighter took a breath at the wrong moment and sucked in a lung full of nasty-tasting smoke. Within moments he felt light-headed and somewhat disoriented.

He was not responding normally to verbal commands and seemed lethargic. He complained of tightness-type chest pain at an 8 on a scale from 1 to 10 that radiated to the left arm, and felt that he could not take a deep breath. As the rescue unit transported him, the firefighter periodically became unconscious, bradycardic and apneic. A few hours later at the hospital, a training officer convinced the ER doctor that the firefighter may be suffering from cyanide poisoning. The hospital initiated treatment with a cyanide antidote kit.”

### Comments

Hydrogen cyanide (HCN) is a probable cause for acute firefighter illness and death. This highly toxic gas is emitted when there's incomplete combustion of modern construction materials and household products. Firefighters are exposed to this gas and a multitude of toxins (many of which are known human carcinogens) during both structural fire suppression and overhaul procedures. Unfortunately, it's still common practice for firefighters to conduct overhaul without wearing their SCBA.

The City of Phoenix Fire Department participated in a 2000 study to characterize the smoke toxins present during overhaul procedures and found that firefighters were being exposed to acrolein (respiratory irritant), carbon monoxide (asphyxiant gas), formaldehyde and benzene (both human carcinogens) at levels exceeding published safety ceiling values (D. M. Bolstad et. al., 2000).

HCN is described as the “toxic twin” to CO because the signs and symptoms of exposure are similar. Both gases rapidly inhibit the blood's ability to carry oxygen to body tissues, including the heart and brain. HCN has been directly linked to acute illness in firefighters after structure fire suppression.

On March 23, 2006, a Providence firefighter suffered a heart attack and tested positive for cyanide poisoning. On March 24, in the aftermath of three structure fires, 27 members of the Providence Fire Department exhibited signs and symptoms that included headache, weakness, fatigue and nausea, for which they sought medical treatment. Eight of the 27 tested positive for cyanide poisoning (J.C. Varone et al., 2008).

Exposure to HCN and other toxins is an expected outcome of smoke inhalation in closed-space fires. Firefighters need to be aware that these gases and particles can enter the body by inhalation, ingestion and absorption through the skin, eyes and mucous membranes.

### Tips

- Wear SCBA and turnouts properly to prevent exposure.
- Limit exposures by showering as soon as possible after fire suppression and flushing particles from eyes, ears, mouth and nose.
- Immediately launder turnouts, gloves, helmet liners and all other clothing.
- Drinking fluids, as well as sweating as a result of exercising or using a hot tub or sauna, can help flush toxins from the body.

### References

Bolstad-Johnston, D.M. et al. “Characterization of Firefighter Exposures During Fire Overhaul.” *AIHAJ*, (61) September/October 2000.

Varone, J. C., et al. Report of the Investigation Committee in Cyanide Poisonings of Providence Firefighters. *New Solutions: A Journal of Environment Occupational Health Policy*, 2008, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 87–101.



### Cancer Support

The Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) provides assistance to active and retired firefighters dealing with cancer. If you or someone you know is facing cancer, visit the FCSN Web site at [www.FirefighterCancerSupport.org](http://www.FirefighterCancerSupport.org) for information and assistance.

Peter W. Meade, a 43-year member of the Great Neck Alert volunteer fire company in Nassau County, N.Y., was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2005. In September of that year, he underwent a radical prostatectomy followed by 40 radiation treatments. He was then diagnosed with bladder cancer. After two surgeries to remove superficial bladder tumors and chemotherapy, he is trying an immunotherapy called BCG.

The lesson: All men should be checked for prostate problems beginning at age 50. If there's a family history of prostate cancer, start screenings at age 40.

**Valued**

Continued from Page 2

commitment of the fire service but what about the commitment of the firefighter?

Obviously some are more committed than others and that happens with most any organization. For a lot of people this is a career, something you are committed to spending the rest of your life doing whether it be here or somewhere else. You can't imagine doing anything else. That's commitment. For some others it's just a job, a way to make a living, they could take it or leave it. If something better in another field came along they would take it. However, I believe that when the alarm sounds and job has to be done everyone is committed to do so.

Your commitment level determines the type of service people who call us receive.

So, why are firefighters so universally valued? What is it about this profession and the nature of our service that makes you so appreciated? Only you can answer those questions.

**Retirement**

Firefighter  
Steve Ganus  
31 Years Service  
Retired 02/23/2010  
Engine 20

Congratulations and We Wish You Good Luck upon your much earned retirement and future endeavors!

**Mix It Up**

Fighting fire puts demands on both the anaerobic and aerobic energy systems. Make sure your physical training does the same. Interval training is a great way to challenge your anaerobic system.

Don't forget regular flexibility training to improve core strength and

reduce the risk of injury.

**Play It Safe**

It's a well-known fact that firefighters are at a higher risk of developing heart disease and certain types of cancer. Minimize your controllable risk factors for disease by eating right, exercising regularly and using all available safety precautions. Do these things not just on duty, but in your personal life as well.

**Firefighter of the Year**

**CAPTAIN MACK WEAVER**

**Firefighter of the Month**

**FEBRUARY - Doug Cranford - Assistant Fire Marshal**

**Congratulations to Keith Everett and his canine partner Bella for becoming only part of a handful in the country and first and only ones in the State of Alabama to be certified as a Type I FEMA Disaster Canine Search Team.**



**Make it a rule of life to never regret and never to look back.**

**Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it; it's only for wallowing in.**

**Katherine Mansfield – 1888-1923**

## Dates to Remember

**March 14 – Daylight Saving Time Starts**  
**March 17 - St. Patrick's Day**  
**March 20 – First Day of Spring**  
**April 1 – April Fool's Day**  
**April 4 – Easter**  
**April 21 – Administrative Professional's Day**  
**April 22 – Earth Day**



### **MOBILE FIRE-RESCUE**

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