



# THE VOLUNTEER



The Official Newsletter of the  
**ALABAMA ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

**May - August, 2018**

## **Lauderdale County Association Hosts Annual Conference**

Firefighters from around the state gathered in Florence, Alabama for the 41st Annual AAVFD Firefighter Conference July 13-14. The conference was organized and hosted by the Lauderdale County Association of Volunteer Fire Departments. The conference was a great success with approximately 500 in attendance. The volunteers in the Lauderdale County Fire Association are to be commended for their enormous and high-quality work in making the conference superb. They worked very professionally in registering all participants, interacting with attendees on details, organizing many aspects of the conference such as catering, time coordination, entertainment, logistics and accommodation. A special thanks to Scott Childress, Brian Ozier and Steven McEachron for the countless hours you devoted to the conference and serving as conference chairmen.

The conference offered an opportunity to gain valuable insights, meet with firefighters from around the state and learn about new products and equipment from over sixty vendors. Several training classes were offered during the conference to include training on Basic Irons, the new trend of designer drugs and a class on understanding railroads and safe response.

We were honored to have State Fire Marshall Scott Pilgreen, Assistant State Fire Marshall Mark Drinkard and Alabama Fire College Executive Director Matt Russell join us for the annual conference.

The keynote speaker for the annual banquet was Greg Render, Retired, Signal Hill Fire Department and currently program manager and a lead instructor for the International Association of Fire Chiefs – volunteer and combination officers section, Beyond Hoses & Helmets Leadership Course.



You as participants are thanked for all your great input and for many fruitful discussions and interaction during the course of the weekend.

This was a great conference. Thank you for being so positive! We look forward to seeing everyone at the 42nd Annual Conference in Conecuh County in 2019.

Check  
out some of this year's  
Conference pictures on  
page 10!

# FROM THE AAVFD PRESIDENT'S DESK

BY

Greetings Fellow Firefighters,

Let me begin by relaying my appreciation that you have again chosen me to continue to serve as your President for another year. As always, I am very humbled by this opportunity and will continue to work diligently for the volunteer fire service in Alabama. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel that the association or I can assist you in any way. I welcome and solicit any ideas you may have that will make protecting your communities easier on you and your departments. This is YOUR association and I am here to serve you!

I would like to extend a huge Thank You to the members of the Lauderdale County Association of Volunteer Fire Departments for an excellent venue and conference in Florence, Alabama this year. I know the Annual Conference is a huge undertaking and you all did an exceptional job of rising to the occasion.

During the 2018 Legislative session a bill was passed to assist volunteers with tuition reimbursement for EMS training to provide a better medical service to rural Alabama. Act 2018-524 created the Volunteer Rescue Student Reimbursement Program and established procedures and requirements for the program, including the formation of a joint agreement. An appropriation was provided in the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Education Trust Fund budget to reimburse qualifying individuals that successfully complete an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification program through the member institutions of the Alabama Community College System, the University of South Alabama and the Alabama Fire College in consultation with the AAVFD and AARS. This is an excellent opportunity for your department to further train your members at no final expense to the department. As you are all aware most of our call volume is to assist with medical emergencies of some type. This is a trend that has escalated over the past several years and continues today. If we are to continue to provide a professional response to our communities' needs this provides us with a mechanism to get there. The entire document outlining the Act is several pages long and there is also a Student Agreement that must be completed. Please feel free to email Wanda in the office and request a copy of both. The email address is [aavfd@mindspring.com](mailto:aavfd@mindspring.com). If you do not have email access, a copy can be mailed to your department upon request. The office numbers along with the email address are listed on the last page of this magazine.

In closing I ask that each of you continually train and stay alert on each and every incident in which you respond. Know your limitations and those of your crew and equipment and never take unwarranted risk when there is nothing to gain from doing so. You are already selflessly volunteering in one of the most dangerous professions one could enter so don't become a statistic for others to learn from your mistake!

May God Bless and keep you safe always. Thank you for your service and dedication!

Mike W. Green





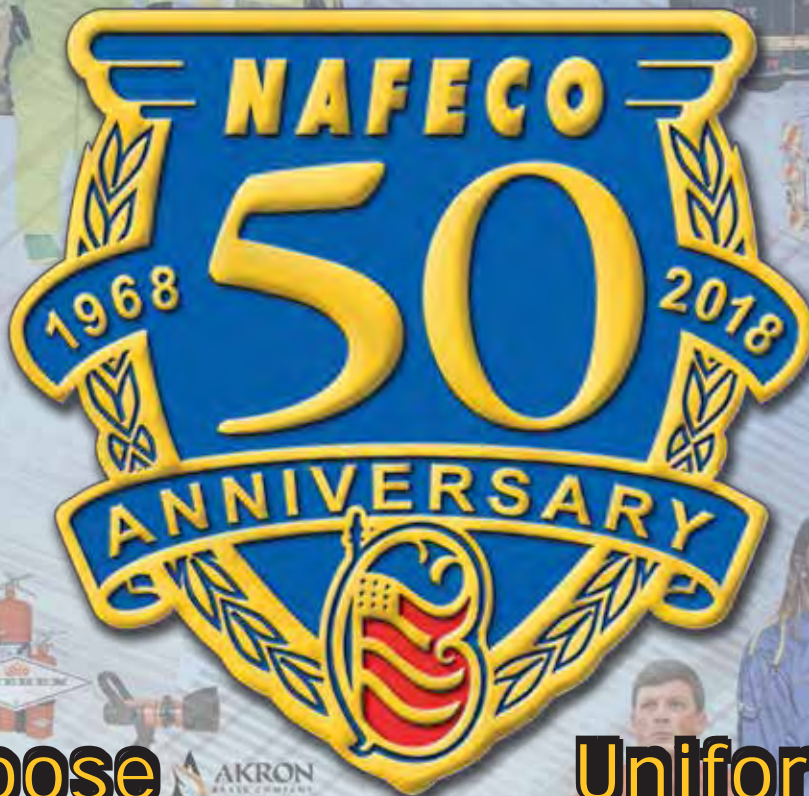


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# AAVFD Auxiliary

## Proudly Serving the AAVFD!

The AAVFD Auxiliary is an active participant in the annual conference each year. In addition to the vendor booth selling AAVFD t-shirts, the auxiliary sponsors the Sportsmanship award which includes a trophy and \$100.00, donates door prizes for the annual banquet and we make a financial contribution to the host county. We are a small group of ladies making a difference in the AAVFD!

The members of the AAVFD Auxiliary provide needed support and assistance to the AAVFD. It is the ambition of the state auxiliary to help in organizing local auxiliaries throughout the state. A few purposes of the Auxiliary include: promote understanding of fire service thus enabling spouses to

grow in their position of helpmates; promote friendships among firefighters' families; promote educational and social ideas and promote public relations.

New members both men and women are welcome to join. Our meetings are held quarterly in conjunction with the board meetings as well as the annual meeting.

We also maintain an active Facebook page – AAVFD Auxiliary. This page contains educational information/programs, news on fire departments throughout the state, AAVFD meetings and current events as well as other information. Please be sure to “like” the page and stay up to date on the volunteer fire service!

## 2018-2019 AAVFD Officers

Election of the AAVFD Officers was held during the annual AAVFD Conference on July 14, 2018. The following were elected to serve as the 2018 - 2019 officers:

President Mike Green	2nd Vice-President Dan Hopkins	Secretary Mary Sells
1st Vice-President Derrick Gatlin	3rd Vice-President Joey Moffett	Treasurer Joe Golden

## AAVFD DISTRICT DIRECTORS 2018-19

### DISTRICT 1

DIR: JERRY JACKSON  
ALT DIR: JEFFERY WAGNER  
CALHOUN  
CHEROKEE  
DEKALB  
ETOWAH  
JACKSON  
MADISON  
MARSHALL

### DISTRICT 2

DIR: KENNETH EDWARDS  
ALT DIR: JOSH BRYANT  
BLOUNT  
CULLMAN  
JEFFERSON  
SHELBY  
ST CLAIR  
WALKER  
WINSTON

### DISTRICT 3

DIR: BILLY DOSS  
ALT DIR: REID VAUGHAN  
FAYETTE  
GREENE  
HALE  
LAMAR  
PICKENS  
SUMTER  
TUSCALOOSA

### DISTRICT 4

DIR: JAMES COTTON  
ALT DIR: ELMORE UNBEHANT  
CHAMBERS  
CLAY  
CLEBURNE  
COOSA  
RANDOLPH  
TALLADEGA  
TALLAPOOSA

### DISTRICT 5

DIR: MICHAEL GORDON  
ALT DIR: JOHN WILLIAMS  
AUTAUGA  
BIBB  
CHILTON  
DALLAS  
MARENGO  
PERRY  
WILCOX

### DISTRICT 6

DIR: GLENN ADKINS  
ALT DIR: JAMES CHANCEY  
BARBOUR  
COFFEE  
DALE  
GENEVA  
HENRY  
HOUSTON  
PIKE

### DISTRICT 7

DIR: DANIEL DAY  
ALT DIR: ALONZO GRACE  
BUTLER  
CONECUH  
COVINGTON  
CRENSHAW  
ESCAMBIA  
MONROE

### DISTRICT 8

DIR: DAVID WADE  
ALT DIR: DAVID RIKARD  
BALDWIN  
CHOCKTAW  
CLARKE  
MOBILE  
WASHINGTON

### DISTRICT 9

DIR: PAIGE CROUCH  
ALT DIR: SCOTT CHILDERS  
COLBERT  
FRANKLIN  
LAUDERDALE  
LAWRENCE  
LIMESTONE  
MARION  
MORGAN

### DISTRICT 10

DIR: DAVID ROGERS  
ALT DIR: RODNEY RUDOLPH  
BULLOCK  
ELMORE  
LEE  
LOWNDES  
MACON  
MONTGOMERY  
RUSSELL



# Thomasville VFD Firefighters Named Alabama's Top Team in the Firefighter Competition

The weather forecast outside was a humid day in July, the firefighter competition got hotter at the 41st Annual AAVFD Firefighter Competition!

Nine teams from across the state converged in Florence, Alabama to compete for the 2018 Top Firefighter Competition trophy. This year's events included: air pack relay, hose lay and water on the roof. Teams competed for the best time in each event. Each competition is physically challenging and tests the skills and teamwork of each fire department. Teams practice months in advance to prepare for the competition.

Competition Chair Joey Boyd has organized the firefighter competition for more than



Competition  
Chair  
Joey Boyd

ten years. The firefighter contest has all the drama of the Olympics; except these competitors are wearing their firefighting uniforms, including a heavy helmet, boots, and compressed air tank. Chairman Boyd would like to thank all the teams who competed in the 2018 Alabama Firefighter Competition. It was the largest field in several years. Boyd is already looking ahead to the 2019 Firefighter Competition and challenges all departments to participate.

The second annual AAVFD Auxiliary Sportsmanship Award was presented to Fulton VFD. This award is presented to the team who displays exceptional sportsmanship in the competition. Judging includes: respectful, self-control, positive behavior and encouraging other teams.

## Overall Top Team

Thomasville VFD  
Fulton VFD  
East Limestone VFD

## Air-Pack Relay

Thomasville VFD  
Fulton VFD  
East Limestone VFD

## Hose-Lay

Fulton VFD  
East Limestone VFD  
Thomasville VFD

## Water on the Roof

Thomasville VFD  
Fulton VFD  
East Limestone VFD



AAVFD Auxiliary Sportsmanship  
Award- Fulton VFD



Overall Top Team  
Thomasville VFD



Overall 2nd Place – Fulton VFD



Overall 3rd Place – East Limestone VFD





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# Timmy Crager 2018 AAVFD Firefighter of the Year

Timmy Crager, Fire Chief of Laton Hill VFD in Washington County, has been a volunteer firefighter for more than 30 years. He also served the City of Mobile as a firefighter for a couple of years.

Board members of Laton Hill VFD said, because of Timmy the department is very much involved in the community. He involves children in many activities such as the Annual Kids' Day, Bible School, Fire Prevention Parade and trainings. The department hosts a day each summer to allow children to visit and experience being around the fire station.

Training is a huge part of his expectations for the members of his department. He works with American Midstream, a gas plant, to plan



Timmy Crager (L) & Mike Green AAVFD President

and hold drills with the community in the event of an emergency inside their facility. He is dedicated to involving all fire departments in the county in available opportunities to allow them to grow and better serve their community. Timmy was elected president of the Washington County Association of Volunteer Fire Departments in 2018. He recently started a "Chiefs Meeting" in the county that allows all chiefs to get together and communicate ideas that will better all departments.

Timmy is described as a great leader who deeply cares for his department members. He exemplifies honor and integrity as he leads Laton Hill VFD and Washington County. Several examples were shared by the board members of his department involving his volunteer work in the community along with two calls including a structure fire where an elderly gentleman who was wheelchair bound was trapped inside a burning building and a medical call involving a two month old unresponsive infant.



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## **Rhonda Reeves**

### **2018 AAVFD Sherry Garner Memorial Award of the Year**

Rhonda has been a member of the Spring Valley VFD in Colbert County for the past 6 years, where she has served in the positions of secretary, treasurer, safety officer, community relations officer and president of the rodeo committee (fire department fund raiser). She is one of the first people to volunteer for all the association events, normally taking the lead role in the event. She had the idea to bring in a National Rodeo Association and established the Spring Valley Rodeo as the department's largest fund raiser.



AAVFD President Mike Green and Rhonda Reeves, recipient of the 2018 Sherry Garner Award

She responds to the majority of the calls and is always willing to assist the neighboring departments.

Rhonda is a big advocate for training, always looking for ways for members to enhance their knowledge and ability. She is very passionate about the Spring Valley VFD and loves the community where she resides and serves. Rhonda's entire family is involved in the department and her son currently serves as the fire chief.

Rhonda was nominated by the entire board of directors for Colbert County Association of Volunteer Fire Departments. Congratulations Rhonda Reeves, Sherry Garner Award recipient for 2018!

## **Donald Horton**

### **2018 AAVFD President's Award Recipient**

Donald serves as the Assistant Fire Chief of the North Montgomery VFD in Montgomery County. He also fulfills multiple full-time roles including: safety officer, public information officer and oversight of department training.

Donald became a volunteer firefighter in 2003 with the Fort Mitchell VFD in Russell County. He joined North Montgomery VFD in 2012 after relocating to Montgomery. He is described as a dedicated member, working his way through the ranks to his current position. Donald has extensive trainings and certifications through the Alabama Fire College and other agencies. Donald recently received the INVEST programs Master Coin for completing the required standards. He has a strong desire to learn and teach and often times takes leave from his job to attend these courses.

Donald's technical expertise in hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction has helped him teach multiple hazardous materials

awareness and operations classes in the county. Furthermore, his expertise has allowed him to be employed by the Alabama Fire College as a Props Operator, allowing him to teach students across the state during live fire training.

Donald's fire chief said he never gives up trying. Because of his dedication and attention to detail, he was selected as Assistant Chief of the department in 2015. He is constantly thinking of ways to improve the department and the members. He is a true volunteer with the focus on helping his community.

Congratulations Donald, President's Award recipient for 2018!



AAVFD President Mike Green and President's Award recipient, Donald Horton



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Hale 1500 GPM Pump  
200 Gallon Tank  
Detroit Diesel



**2000 KME Renegade  
Heavy Rescue**  
Detroit Diesel  
Generator  
Light Tower



**2011 Ford F-650  
Quick Attack**  
CET 210 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
CAFS System



**2002 Saulsbury  
Freightliner Rescue  
Pumper Tanker**  
Hale 2250 GPM Pump  
2500 Gallon Tank



**1998 E-One Cyclone  
75' Aerial**  
Hale 1500 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
Detroit Diesel



**2012 E-One Cyclone  
Rescue Pumper**  
Waterous 1500 GPM Pump  
1000 Gallon Tank  
Light Tower



**1996 E-One Hurricane  
95' Platform**  
Hale 1500 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
Detroit Diesel



**2001 E-One 75' Quint**  
Hale 1500 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
Detroit Diesel



**2001 Pierce Saber Rescue**  
Detroit Engine  
Allison Automatic  
Generator  
Light Tower



**2004 American LaFrance  
LTI 75' Aerial**  
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375 Gallon Tank  
Detroit Diesel



**2001 Seagrave 105' Tower**  
Waterous 2000 GPM Pump  
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Detroit Diesel



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Kenworth Rescue**  
Light Tower  
SCBA Fill Station



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Caterpillar Diesel



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Cummins Diesel



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International Pumper**  
Hale 1250 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
Navistar Diesel



**2006 Pierce  
Enforcer Pumper**  
Waterous 1500 GPM Pump  
500 Gallon Tank  
Cummins Diesel



**2000 E-One Ford  
F-750 Pumper**  
Hale 1250 GPM Pump  
750 Gallon Tank  
Caterpillar Diesel

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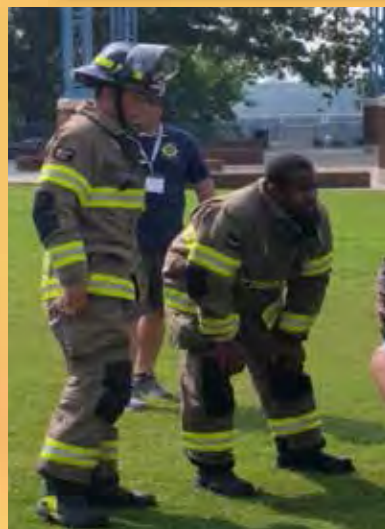
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# Down Memory Lane







**AAVFD Conference  
July 2018 Florence, AL**



*From the Desk of  
Gene Necklaus, President  
Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs*

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Back in early 2014, then State Fire Marshal Ed Paulk made an appeal to the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs to join in reducing the high number of fire deaths that occur every year in Alabama. At that time (and still today), living in Alabama means a citizen is more than twice as likely to die in a fire compared to the national average according to the United States Fire Administration. Our great state has ranked in the top 5 for per capita civilian fatalities across the nation for the last 10 or more years.

Marshal Paulk's request resulted in the Turn Your Attention To Fire Prevention campaign, an effort to reduce our high death rate. The AAFC became the early torch-bearer for Turn Your Attention because we knew that if Alabama fire departments were going to adopt a culture that embraced Community Risk Reduction as the norm and not the exception, department leadership must be on board. We've all been there when a good idea or change has been shot down or faded away because the leadership didn't embrace it.

On a personal note, there are few bigger burdens than swearing to protect a community and finding out a citizen could still be alive if we had done something BEFORE the fire started. We will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new engine because those are necessary to do our duty. As my department has been trying to plan on fire engine replacements for the last two years, we've lost 5 civilians that could still be alive for the cost of a few smoke alarms.

Digital Turn Your Attention logos are available on the Alabama Fire College website, and most area dealers have agreed to put the logos on new apparatus at no or reduced cost. I ask you and your department to help spread the fire prevention message. For more information on Turn Your Attention To Fire Prevention, visit the Turn Your Attention Facebook page or the website ([www.turnyourattention.com](http://www.turnyourattention.com)), or email the AAFC at [info@alfirechiefs.com](mailto:info@alfirechiefs.com).

## **AlaFire-**

Many of you may have seen or heard about the AlaFire system that is now available in Alabama. The AlaFire system is a reporting system that stemmed from the Turn Your Attention To Fire Prevention program. When the TYATFP group was working to identify why Alabama had such a high fire death rate, it was discovered that of the 1185 fire departments in the state, only 342 report to NFIRS. This makes it near impossible to track the number and causes of fires that happen in Alabama, and without that data it's impossible to identify ways to reduce the death rate.

The question became, "Why is the NFIRS percentage so low?" Realizing that the vast majority of the Alabama fire service is volunteer based, several volunteer departments were surveyed about this. Some common themes were noted in the replies.

'NFIRS reports take too much time, and we have to go back to work/home/etc.', 'NFIRS reports are confusing, there are too many codes and required things.', 'Good software/computers/internet is too expensive and our department doesn't have access to them.'

These responses were the motivation to create AlaFire. AlaFire is designed to be quick, it has less than 10 fields required and a full fire can be submitted in less than 5 minutes. AlaFire is designed to be simple, it has drop down menus with plain language. When done on the scene, AlaFire uses your GPS location for coordinates. And most importantly, AlaFire is FREE. Any Alabama fire department can get access, reports are entered through a user's smartphone, and there is no cost at all to the department or user.

*Continued on page 15, see Necklaus ...*



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## Bits and Pieces From Around the State

### Rosa VFD

in Blount County held their annual business meeting on May 17, 2018. **Jeff Harmon** was named Firefighter of the Year.

### North Montgomery VFD

(Montgomery County) held an INVEST coin presentation on May 24, 2018. Alabama Fire College Commissioner & AAVFD President **Mike Green** presented three coins during the presentation. Basic INVEST coins were presented to Lieutenant **Kyle Bolling** and Firefighter **Jonathan Mosley**. A master INVEST coin was presented to Assistant Chief **Donald Horton**. Congratulations on your success! Your dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to the fire service are inspiring.



Pictured L to R Firefighter Jonathan Mosley, Lt. Kyle Bolling, Assistant Fire Chief Donald Horton, Fire Chief Bruce Christian and Alabama Fire College Commissioner & AAVFD President Mike Green

**Brierfield VFD** in Shelby County **Fire Chief, Spruce McKee**, was named the 2018 Southeastern Association of Fire Chief's volunteer/combination chief of the year. Congratulation Chief McKee!

Pink Heals Central Alabama is having a **BBQ Cook Off** following the Montevallo Fire Prevention Parade on October 13, 2018 at the Montevallo Orr Park (277 Park Drive Montevallo, AL). Everyone is invited to attend the Pink Pig BBQ Cook Off and Pink Pig Fire Truck Pull. All proceeds will go to **Pink Heals Central Alabama**. Just remember it is all about raising money to keep the Pink Fire Trucks rolling. For additional information or to register contact **Lamar White** (205) 432-8052 or **Jim Terrell** (205) 281-7985. Please feel free share and help spread the word! Thank you!

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*Necklaus - Continued from page 12 ...*

There are categories for fire incidents and fire prevention activities like smoke alarm installations. The department manager can view the activity from the website and download it for reports to the board, council, or community when fundraising. Each department's information is secure; AlaFire is designed and supported by the Center for Advanced Public Safety. This is the same group that does the E-ticket and Driver's License info used by ALEA. Most importantly, AlaFire can help us learn where fires are happening, how many smoke alarms are being installed, and what prevention activities are helping reduce the number of fire deaths. If you would like to register your department or more information, email [info@alfirechiefs.com](mailto:info@alfirechiefs.com) today!

## AAFC Membership-

Membership to the Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs is available to ALL of Alabama's fire service, and if you aren't a member I ask that you consider joining. With all the changes and issues that the fire service is facing, the best way for us to answer those challenges is through a unified effort, all working to protect our people and improve our service.

One of the things we realize is that we need a more Volunteer membership if we are truly going to represent the Alabama Fire Chiefs. We made changes to our by-laws that would allow for Chief Officers of departments with at least 80% volunteer membership to receive a full membership at the reduced rate of \$25 per year. This membership has all the benefits of the regular membership, including a discount on each of our annual conferences and accidental death insurance. This also comes with a large network of Chiefs from around the state that often shares ideas and resources with a common goal. Visit our website or email one of our Directors for more information.

---

*Gene Necklaus is President of Alabama Association of Fire Chiefs*



# ALABAMA FIRE COLLEGE

## AND PERSONNEL STANDARDS COMMISSION

**Matt Russell**  
Executive Director



Dear AAVFD Members,

I hope this letter finds you all very happy and healthy. Everything is going extremely well at your Alabama Fire College. As such I would like to provide a brief overview of happenings at the Alabama Fire College. The Alabama Fire College staff is continually monitoring trends from one year to the next in order to gauge our progress. Below is a summary of the Student Services Report that is generated to track the number of students who have attended Alabama Fire College courses, the number of courses taught, the location of the various courses, and the number of certifications issued during 2017 and 2018. The chart below indicates that while we have had virtually the same number of courses both years and the student count has been lower in 2018, those courses have resulted in a larger number of certifications issued this year. While we do take pride in the amount of activity generated, we take greater pride when our students are successful in their quest for certification. The success of our programs is largely attributable to the hard work of our partner Regional and Extension Training Centers, AAVFD members taking the time out of their already busy schedules to host and attend local courses, the ten Regional Coordinators who facilitate these efforts, as well as Alabama Fire College

Special Programs  
Supervisor Reid  
Vaughan.

Student Services Report	Courses	Students	Campus	RTC	Field	Certifications
2017	241	27,500	3,020	1,341	23,139	7,271
2018	240	24,862	2,670	1,474	20,718	7,384

As you can see in the Student Services

Report there is a significant amount of training that is occurring in the field as well as at RTC's/ETC's. Earlier this year while evaluating our operational effectiveness, data was collected regarding the amount of training that had occurred at RTC's/ETC's during the past three years. It was determined that if those same students had attended training at the Alabama Fire College campus in Tuscaloosa it would have cost the students and/or departments approximately \$1.2 million in per diem alone. Or said another way, these students received training in their local areas because the RTC's/ETC's were in place.

Thanks to the efforts of Section Chief David Thornburg and Adjunct Instructor Rod Glover, Hoover Police Department (retired), we will be launching an eight-hour pilot Active Shooter and Hostile Event (ASHER) course in late August with full implementation and delivery beginning prior to the end of this year. Please monitor our website for details.

The RT: Wilderness Search and Rescue Technical Review Committee has been hard at work updating this course. They have recommended adoption of the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) Fundamentals of Search and Rescue, 2nd Edition, as the textbook. The revision should be completed by the end of 2018.

There are numerous Career Tech high school firefighter programs in place throughout the state. These programs allow students to complete their Volunteer 160 training while still in high school and sit for the Certified Volunteer Firefighter certification upon graduation from the program. There were several Career Tech high school graduates who, in May, applied for and were granted \$900 scholarships to attend firefighter Bridge Programs. Many have taken full advantage of this opportunity and are training to become career firefighters. Much thanks is due to the generous donation from the Daniel Foundation which allowed these energetic and enthusiastic young men the opportunity to fulfil their lifelong dreams of becoming firefighters.

Beginning October 1, 2018 there will be a 10% increase in tuition. This increase was approved as a two-step process which began in October, 2017. This will increase the tuition for most courses by about \$30. For specific course costs for the 2018-2019 fiscal year go to: <http://www.alabamafirecollege.org/docs/default-source/docs/tuition-table-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

I am hopeful that the Alabama Fire College staff is responsive to your needs and that you are satisfied with the services we provide. I assure you that we strive diligently to fulfil our obligation to you and appreciate every emergency responder who allows us the opportunity to serve them. Our goal is to always attempt to make your interaction with the Alabama Fire College as positive an experience as possible. If I, or anyone at the Alabama Fire College, may be of service please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very Respectfully, Matt Russell





# ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION

PROTECT • SUSTAIN • EDUCATE

## FROM THE DESK OF ...



**RICK OATES**  
**STATE FORESTER**

Dear AAVFD Members:

I don't know how the relatively wet spring and summer have impacted VFDs across the state, but from a wildfire stance, it's been somewhat quiet. We like that for many reasons, but obviously the safety of our fire fighters is the main reason!

There is a lot going on at the Forestry Commission that impacts volunteer fire departments across the state. I will highlight two of them in this letter.

The first is that we have decided to re-institute our grant program for the VFDs. You will remember in the past we've offered a \$5,000 grant to purchase wildland fire fighting PPE and wildfire suppression equipment. One exciting change is that this grant no longer requires a match. Previous grants have required VFDs to match our money on a 50/50 basis. We've done away with that requirement for 2019.

The grants will require that the equipment be purchased and paid for in advance. We will reimburse up to \$5,000 of eligible expenses under this grant. The grant applications must be completed by October 31, 2018 and VFDs will be notified by December 1, 2018 if they will receive the grant. This year all expenses must be paid and the final report submitted by August 1, 2019. If a report and request for reimbursement is not made by August 1, the VFD will forfeit the grant.

We are excited to be able to offer this grant again. I hope it helps volunteer firefighters to operate more safely. For a complete set of the rules regarding grant priorities and eligible equipment, please contact the AFC's Volunteer Fire Department Coordinator Greg Wood at (256) 232-7940.

The second thing I will mention is the new rules for decertifying VFDs. As many of you know, there are a few departments across the state that no longer respond to calls and don't function as an active VFD anymore. The reasons for this are many, but chiefly it appears to stem from an insufficient number of volunteers in these areas.

Last year the Commission promulgated new rules that allow us, at the request of a county VFD association, to begin a process to decertify a department. The process outlines clear steps to follow and allows the VFD several opportunities to clear up any deficiencies, but at the end of the day, if the VFD is not functioning as it should, there is a process to decertify the department.

To date, this process has been used twice, both times to decertify departments that have not responded to calls in many years and have no active leadership. This allows other VFDs to assume these coverage areas and provide better fire protection to the citizens in those areas. It has been successful so far in accomplishing the goals of the new regulations.

We have a great partnership with the volunteer fire departments across the state and I look forward to watching it prosper. If the AFC can ever be of assistance, please call Greg Wood or me at any time!

Thanks for all you do.

# FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

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## ILLEGAL MISUSE OF FUNDS CASTS NEGATIVE LIGHT



As your State Fire Marshal it has been my custom when preparing an article for the AAVFD Newsletter to draw attention to ways that we all can help to reduce the occurrence of fires and fire related deaths. While this continues to be an extremely significant issue in this article I want to bring attention to another important concern, one that I addressed at the AAVFD Business Meeting in Florence, Al. approximately 5 weeks ago.

The important concern I am referencing is the funding that volunteer fire departments receive in order to perform their mission in the communities they serve. The specific concern with funding is the lack of accountability. As I stated in Florence my office is receiving too many calls related to Volunteer Fire Departments misusing the money they receive. In other words members of departments are using these funds for their own personal gain, i.e. mortgage payments, vacations, car payments, dinners, etc.

It is critical for the AAVFD Members to understand that when one of the departments or any of its members misuses department monies whether it comes from a governmental source or from fund raising those involved have committed a criminal offense known as Theft of Property.

Unfortunately and as I clearly stated in Florence, my office has conducted numerous criminal investigations into this activity which has led to felony criminal charges against a number of current and past members of departments. Most of these people are either serving or have served in leadership roles.

In my opinion the majority of the 1071 Volunteer Fire Departments in Alabama strive to do the right thing, however the minority that do not is a growing number. This criminal activity conducted by a few is casting a negative light on the men and women who serve honorably every day for their community.

My challenge to the readers of this article is the same as to those attending the Business Meeting in Florence; the membership and leadership of AAVFD has the power to bring this activity to an end by taking steps to ensure that there is fiscal accountability within the volunteer fire service.

As your State Fire Marshal I stand ready to assist AAVFD in this effort.



*State Fire Marshal  
Scott F. Pilgreen*



# THE BELL TOLLED

♦ **Dewayne Wood**, age 47, passed away unexpectedly on July 18, 2018. He served with the Batten VFD in Coffee County for 29 years. Wood served as captain, assistant chief and chief with the Battens VFD. He was a dedicated member of the fire department. Wood enjoyed gardening and barbecuing with family and friends. His faith was very important to him and he was a faithful servant.

♦ **Charlie Lott**, age 43, passed away unexpectedly on June 23, 2018. Lott was a firefighter with Oak Grove VFD in Mobile County. He was a proud and dedicated member of the fire department. He also enjoyed hunting and fishing and was a huge University of Alabama fan.

♦ **Susan Register** passed away on June 23, 2018 from natural causes. She served as a firefighter since 1990 at Pike County Fire & Rescue as well as Meeksville VFD in Pike County.

♦ **Lemuel "Paul" Hunter** passed away on June 11, 2018. He was a long standing member of Barnwell VFD in Baldwin County and served as Assistant Chief.

♦ **Jeff Taylor** passed away on May 19, 2018. Taylor was a member of Lacey Springs VFD in Morgan County serving for ten years after also serving two years at Cotaco VFD and one year at Taluca VFD. He was a father, son and a true firefighter to all.

♦ **Billy Ray Emmons** passed away on May 13, 2018. He was a founding father and Board President for the Wallace VFD in Escambia County.

♦ **Dewitt Everett** passed away on May 7, 2018. He served 35 years, retiring as Captain of the Monroeville Fire & Rescue in Monroe County.

♦ **Roger P. Young, Jr.**, age 37, passed away on April 20, 2018 as a result of a motorcycle/vehicle accident. Young was a firefighter with the Craig Volunteer Fire Department (Dallas County) since 2016. He will be remembered by his fellow firefighters for his sense of humor, smile and his problem solving attitude.

♦ **Debbie Cox** passed away on April 2, 2018. She served more than 31 years as a member of the Cotaco VFD in Morgan County.

♦ **Dale Cox** passed away on April 2, 2018. He served more than 31 years as a member of the Cotaco VFD in Morgan County.

♦ **Fred Reddish**, age 75, passed away on March 13, 2018. Reddish was the Assistant Chief and Treasurer of the Barfield VFD in Clay County. Prior to being appointed as the Assistant Chief, he was a former firefighter. Reddish also assisted in writing and receiving many grants for the fire department. His dedication to his family, church, and fire department will be greatly missed.

♦ **Gerald R. Turney** passed away on February 24, 2018. He served more than 45 years with Cotaco VFD in Morgan County including Secretary/Treasurer.

♦ **James Fields** passed away on January 27, 2018. He was a member of Wicksburg VFD in Houston.

♦ **Bennie Drinkard** passed away on January 19, 2018. He was a member of the Rock Creek VFD in Morgan County for 23 years.

♦ **Pruitt Johnson** passed away on September 17, 2017. He was a member of the Oak Ridge VFD in Morgan County for 44 years.

If any volunteer Fire Department (member or not) has a firefighter die in the line of duty or as a result of a line of duty injury (examples: at the scene, going to or from the scene), notify ONE of the following IMMEDIATELY, no matter what day it is or what time of the day or night: Mike W. Green (334) 309-5026, Derrick Gatlin (256) 998-0043, Dan Hopkins (256) 225-7230 or Honor Guard Commander Daniel Day (251) 267-2527. A copy of the booklet "Death In The Line Of Duty" may be obtained from the Montgomery office. 1-888-972-2833 or at [www.aavfd.org](http://www.aavfd.org).

About the Volunteer: *The Volunteer* is issued three times a year in January, May and September. Articles, information and advertisements for the newsletter must be submitted to the AAVFD office no later than the fifteenth of the month before publication. We reserve the right to edit for length, corrections and font.

Other AAVFD Info: All membership information, insurance information, changes of addresses and inquiries having to do with the AAVFD should be sent directly to the Montgomery Office.

## AAVFD Officers:

President: Mike W. Green

1<sup>st</sup> VP: Derrick Gatlin

2<sup>nd</sup> VP: Dan Hopkins

3<sup>rd</sup> VP: Joey Moffett

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Treasurer: Joe Golden

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## **YOU ANSWER THE CALL.** *that's why we are here for you!*

The Alabama Fire College believes training and dedication go hand in hand. We want to recognize you for your dedication to safety and your community as a volunteer firefighter. That's why we developed **INVEST** (InState Volunteer Emergency Services), an incentive program comprised of four levels of training. Upon completion of each level, a challenge coin, numbered and assigned to you, will be awarded.

### *Which level do you qualify for?*

For more info, contact your Regional Coordinator  
[www.alabamafirecolleg.org/regional-map](http://www.alabamafirecolleg.org/regional-map)  
[www.alabamafirecollege.org/invest](http://www.alabamafirecollege.org/invest)

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