



# THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – August 14, 2020

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"It's probably my job to tell you life isn't fair, but I figure you already know that. So, instead I'll tell you that hope is precious, and you're right not to give it up."

Unk



Describe this in one word



I just, well, I have no words for this Chief Niemynski 😊



A big shout out to all the wonderful volunteers for their amazing work with the Firefighter Angel Foundations Back Pack Event

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## The Chief's Desk

Imagine for a moment that you are a Captain in the United States Navy with a storied career as a Naval Aviator, leader, and developer. I'm not sure how the Navy operates today, but in the 1980's, it was Naval Aviators that ascended the ranks to command carriers. You are the Skipper of the U.S.S. Ranger, a super carrier that requires 5000 personnel to operate. I cannot say for certain, but it seems impossible to me for an individual to know what is happening in every division, on every level, and with every person on what is essentially a floating city with that many people.

The 1980's were a time of tension in the world, but the Vietnam War was over so you're operating in a time of relative peace. However, drugs are a huge problem in the country as well as in the Navy. As the Skipper of the ship, the Navy has tied your hands leaving you with virtually zero options to disrupt the drug pipeline freely flowing to your personnel.

While you try to establish a culture of accountability for your crew and their subordinates, bad things will happen. For Captain Dan Pederson, that time came when a 20 year-old sailor with a history of drug abuse, behavioral issues, and violence against security personnel died of a heart attack on deck while being put through physical training. He had been detained by security forces the evening before and had once again become violent. The physical training was punishment for his actions.

Technically, the sailor should have been discharged long before this incident, but was not. Captain Pederson did not have any knowledge of the sailor, or the security crew responsible for him at the time of his death. Yet, as the Captain of the ship, he was responsible. Subsequent investigations cleared the captain and his crew of wrong doing in the death of the young man. However, the young man's parents were large donors to a Congressman in Michigan who had a seat on the Armed Services Committee.

In order to promote to the rank of Admiral in the Navy, you have to be approved through the Armed Services Committee. After a storied 29-year career, Captain Pederson retired from the Navy. While he was up for promotion to Admiral, the politics surrounding the incident had derailed his opportunity.

The above serves as an example of what it means to be in a leadership role and accountable for everything anyone does under your command. You are and can be held accountable whether you were present or not, no matter the degree of separation between you and the personnel involved. Even when cleared through a legal review process, the politics of the day can end up being your downfall. Bad things do happen to good people.

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### Upcoming Events:

August 17 – Station Visits, office stuff  
August 18 – AFCA mutual aid Zoom meeting  
August 19 – PVEDF Board Meeting, Speak at Summit FD Board Meeting  
August 20 – Zoom Conference Call AFCA and Texas Chiefs

### Board Meetings:

August 24  
CAFMA – 1700-1830

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## **Ammonium nitrate: What firefighters must know**

By: Robert Avsec

Ammonium nitrate (AN) became infamous when convicted bomber Timothy McVeigh used it in the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995.

Ammonium nitrate is back in our collective consciousness with the horrific Beirut, Lebanon, blast, and its reminders of the explosion at a West, Texas, fertilizer plant that claimed at least 15 lives, caused 200 injuries and destroyed more than 50 homes. The Beirut disaster is only the latest in an inglorious history between humans and ammonium nitrate.

More than a dozen other explosions involving the chemical have occurred over the past century. The deadliest was on April 16, 1947, when a series of explosions rocked the huge waterfront petrochemical complex at Texas City, just southeast of Houston.

The disaster began with an explosion on a French freighter filled with more than 2,000 tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. The blast and ensuing fires left at least 576 people dead and 5,000 injured.

[firerescue1.com](http://firerescue1.com)

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## **How Leaders Build The Resilient Organizations Of Tomorrow: A Navy SEAL's Perspective**

By: Brent Gleeson

Resilient organizations are well-prepared for change. Regardless of the type or magnitude of the transformation an organization is facing, one of the ultimate goals is to prepare the company for long-term strength and agility - a core function of leadership and management in the 21st century. The goal is not to simply navigate today's needed changes but also to create a resilient organization poised for more change. A team that is ready for the next battle – whenever that may be.

As the Navy SEAL Ethos says, "We train for war and fight to win. I stand ready to bring the full spectrum of combat power to bear in order to achieve my mission and the goals established by my country. The execution of my duties will be swift and violent when required yet guided by the very principles that I serve to defend ... I am never out of the fight."

Navy SEAL training is designed to create warfighters who anticipate, prepare for, adapt to, and bounce back from change better than anyone else on the battlefield. Why? Because resilient organizations require resilient team members who thrive in adversity.

Resiliency is quickly becoming another one of the many business buzzwords, but there is a reason for that. And while resiliency may seem like an obvious trait for a company to pursue, it's seems to be easier said than done. It's more important than long-term planning, because as we all know, the best-laid business plans come into conflict -- especially when navigating the inevitable obstacles that require organizational improvements or major transformations.

Resilient organizations have sound leadership at all levels and strong cultures founded on trust, accountability, and agility. They have a foundation of meaningful core values that all members of the team believe deeply in and a sense of team unity beyond what you find in many organizations. They also have a tendency to show consistent and better-than-average profitability year after year.

[Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)

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## **Chief's Desk Continued**

We are seeing some of this on a national scale right now. While I'm not going to get into a substantive discussion regarding the topic, we've witnessed what happened in Minnesota and we've watched as the tide of discontent has spread across the country. Now we are seeing good Police Chiefs with no connection to Minneapolis leave their positions, while good officers continue to suffer for the sins of a few.

It doesn't matter if you are present, or you are thousands of miles away enjoying a Mia Tai on the beach, if you are in a leadership role, you are responsible. Creating a culture of accountability and instilling that throughout an entire organization can be difficult, and depending on the size of the organization, it may be near impossible to ensure the culture is pervasive. We are after all imperfect human beings who have been gifted free will i.e. each individual chooses their own actions. Our hope is that we hire and promote the right people for the right positions who will make decisions in line with our stated values.

In the fire service, we count on our officers to promote and instill the culture of our organizations. Depending on the organization and its leadership the culture can either be good or bad – it starts at the top. In my position, I know it's those riding the front right seat or serving in the role of manager that make or break our organization every day. If the company officer is someone that exemplifies our mission, vision, values, and philosophies as outlined in *The Compass*, then I'm fairly certain they have established a culture of accountability within their crew. When I know this is the case, I can sleep well at night knowing our folks are in good hands. If we have a disjointed company officer, then we have to look to the Battalion Chief to ensure they are holding their company officers accountable.

Accountability doesn't start and end at the officer level. Sometimes people of lower ranks have to lead up, for their own safety as well as that of their crew. That is not a position that we want to expose our people to nor does it fit our desired culture, but it can certainly happen. The question for those in that situation is, what course do you take in an effort to ensure the issues are addressed at a higher level? That's a tough one, and certainly requires some intestinal fortitude. We hope that our Battalion Chiefs can be on top of these situations, but like the rest of us they cannot be in all places at all times over seeing every aspect of your day. Quite honestly, you don't want them hovering over you monitoring your every move.

I remember hearing of a company officer years ago (not in Arizona) who was viewed as wholly ineffective, and considered a liability by his crew. The staff would hear rumors, but would never be

provided specifics or any evidence that there were substantive issues. That crew was dispatched to a structure fire one night and should have been the first in engine. There was a bad storm at the time which made it even more critical to get crews on the scene and mitigate the incident as quickly and safely as possible. Unfortunately, the engine did not arrive as first in, nor did they arrive second in. Instead, it took over 20 minutes to arrive on the scene meaning they were the last arriving unit. To my understanding, from their station it should have taken 4-5 minutes to arrive.

The agency's staff conducted an investigation, but the crew refused to provide details that would contradict the officer's story. Ultimately, the crew decided it best to protect the officer and stated they would do what they needed to ensure their own safety. This took place in an area that does not follow what we would consider standard investigative processes. If they did, there may have been some resolution. It is near impossible to take action on rumor when no basis for the complaint or supporting evidence is ever produced. Had they been in a position to follow a true investigative model, the crew on the engine would have been compelled to provide a complete accounting of the events that evening. Had something gone horribly wrong on the call, the staff would have likely been held responsible for failure to act based on unsubstantiated and non-specific rumors.

Bad things do happen to good people e.g. Captain Dan Pederson. So, what can you do as you move through the ranks? Know and understand the intent of our *Compass*. Have the courage to call out what you see and take appropriate action. Help to establish a culture of accountability. You still have to trust in people no matter how imperfect we may be. Do not micromanage. The right culture negates the need for managers to hover. If there is a mistake, own it, learn from it, and move on. I've said it before and I'll say it again here – make a decision. If it's not correct, we can work through that, but not making a decision is a far worse course of action. You know our *Compass* and you know our policies and SOGs so you should have a good foundation from which to make a decision. It's when you go completely outside of the rails that we may have a bit more of an issue.

In my mind, Captain Pederson's story serves as a good example of what I mean when I say that as the Fire Chief I am ultimately responsible. That doesn't mean that I will necessarily get fired for the small infractions we see from time to time. But if there is something big, whether I am present or not, it is my responsibility. I know that, I understand it, and I'm willing to accept it because I also know the caliber of people we have in our organization. I also know that the culture we are trying to create is embraced by the collective. It's not something I concocted in a silo, rather it is something we did together when we created CAFMA. Know and understand your role as you move through the ranks, and try to understand that your actions can have a ripple effect far beyond your corner of the world.