



# THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **July 29, 2022**

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"Greatness begins beyond your comfort zone."

— Robin S. Sharma

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## The Chief's Desk

On Tuesday, July 26, 2022, we made history! Okay, maybe not history, but a significant step forward! Well, maybe not significant, but it was cool, especially when we look around our state, as well as our country, and consider the relationship between law enforcement and fire. What am I talking about? Prescott Police Chief Amy Bonney scheduled a social gathering at our favorite watering hole, Founding Fathers Collective, for her, Prescott Valley Police Chief Bob Ticer, Prescott Fire Chief Holger Durre, Sheriff Dave Rhodes, and me. While the Sheriff was unable to attend, the four of us forged on and met in public for a couple of cocktails, or soda, and good conversation.

Our hope is to get together on a more regular basis out in public places so people see the connection we have and the partnership we enjoy in our area. In our opinion, the closer we work together, the more seamless the working relationship is in the field. To our knowledge, the police chiefs and fire chiefs have never all gone out together just to hang out. Maybe not historic, but I still think it was pretty cool. Funny side note, some of the personnel challenges they deal with in law enforcement are not that different than what we deal with. Who knew?? 😊

From our social event, I learned that Chief Durre is dealing with a rumor that includes our organization so I would not be surprised if it is making its way around CAFMA. The rumor is that Chief Durre and I are secretly working on a merger plan between the City of Prescott FD and CAFMA. Let me be very clear on this - **NO** we are **NOT** working on a merger plan – it's not even on the table.

We are, however, working to strengthen the relationship between agency staff, and looking for ways to improve operational efficiencies between our agencies. This will mean some joint efforts, including working together on our respective strategic plans and creating a joint standard of cover for accreditation. All of those things make sense given the close working relationship that is required for us to provide the best possible services to the Quad Cities. I'll say this, there are some creative imaginations out there. But, hey, if that's the worst we're dealing with, carry on 😊

As most of you know by now, the Governor signed new legislation on July 7, 2022 offering an extended DROP program. The law included an emergency clause so it went into effect as soon as the Governor put pen to paper. There are some interesting challenges with the new program that agencies and personnel have to work through. To that end, I thought it would be good to cover it in more detail this week.

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### Upcoming Events:

Aug 1: Senior Staff Meeting, Meet with New Chino Board Member, Work on FRI  
Aug 2: Labor Management, PT, Drone Law Education Meeting, CEOP Planning Meeting  
Aug 3: FRI Planning Meeting, Pediatric EMS Meeting, Record Podcast, Work on FRI PPT  
Aug 4: 2023 Legislative Kick Off Meeting in Phoenix, FRI PPT

### Board Meeting:

Aug 22: Administration  
CAFMA – 1700-1830

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## **‘This is not what I signed up for’: Why some firefighters simply don’t understand the job**

By: Bob Horton

It remains perplexing that you could walk into a fire station today and still hear a firefighter grumble, “This is not what I signed up for.”

The reference is typically related to frequent response to low-acuity medical calls, public assists, and perhaps some other service or social needs.

I have been in this industry for 20 years and the calls have always been dominant in the low-acuity medical and social needs categories. What we are experiencing today is, in fact, what I signed up for all those years ago.

So, if we continue to have firefighters who are confused by the types of calls to which they are most likely to respond, then where have we gone wrong?

- Have we not marketed the position description correctly?
- Have we not recruited with a mindset geared toward candidate success in today’s fire service, not to mention tomorrow’s fire service?
- Have we hired the right people, but the culture is not ready to embrace the all-hazards response organization?

Let’s keep these questions in mind as we consider some solutions to this ongoing issue.

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## **Firefighter decontamination challenges: Knowledge versus practice**

By: Robert Avsec

Do firefighters in the U.S. fully recognize the benefits of post-fire cleaning and decontamination of themselves and their equipment to reduce the risk of developing cancer? Common wisdom would say yes, given the amount of information that’s been promulgated by fire service organizations like the IAFC and IAFF as well as non-fire service organizations like the Fire Fighter Cancer Foundation and the Firefighter Cancer Support Network.

### **FIREFIGHTER CANCER AWARENESS IS NOT ENOUGH**

In 2018, T.R. Harrison and his colleagues, collected data for a research study to see how well firefighters were using their knowledge of the risk (awareness) and changing their work behaviors and practices to the desired results (those identified as reducing the cancer risk). The researchers surveyed 482

firefighters from four Florida fire departments examining their attitudes, norms and perceived barriers to field decontamination processes. Here's a snapshot of the findings:

“Overall, firefighters reported positive attitudes, beliefs, and perceived norms about decontamination, but showering after a fire was the only decontamination process that occurred regularly, with field decontamination, use of cleansing wipes, routine gear cleaning, and other behaviors all occurring less frequently. Firefighters reported time and concerns over wet gear as barriers to decontamination.”

The study's results showed that while firefighter attitudes were overwhelmingly favorable toward cleaning gear (knowledge), their actual decontamination and cleaning behaviors (doing) did not follow at the same level. This is somewhat like the divergence between attitude and behavior in other areas of health and safety concern, such as public attitudes and behaviors related to using a phone to talk or text while driving.

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## **Chief's Desk Continued**

Those eligible for DROP can now extend to seven years rather than five; however, there are some parameters that must be met. To be eligible for the extended DROP after July 7, 2022, you must have served 24.5 years and be 51 years of age. If you submitted your paperwork for the DROP, but did not enter DROP prior to July 7, you are not eligible to extend unless you meet the above criteria. For example, if you filled out your paperwork prior to the 7<sup>th</sup>, but are not actively in the DROP and have not served 24.5 years, nor are you 51 y/o, you're not eligible for the extension. You will not be eligible for the waiver, either. The only way for you to be eligible would be to withdraw your paperwork and wait until you've met the criteria before resubmitting your forms.

For those who are active in the DROP today, the law allows the Agency to determine whether or not they will provide a waiver allowing you to extend your contract from five years to seven. In our case, we have 18 personnel in the DROP. Technically, out of the 18, only one person meets the newly established criteria. However, they added the waiver language into the bill because those members in the DROP prior to July 7 who did not meet the 24.5 years of service and 51 years of age did not have the opportunity to consider extending their careers until they met the new requirements.

The CAFMA Board, per the request of the Union, approved extending the opportunity for waivers to all 18 members at the July 25 Board meeting. There are a couple of stipulations requested by Staff that the Board also approved. First, those 18 members have until the close of business on August 25 to notify HR and Chief Feddema of their intent to extend. Anyone who has not made notification by that date and time will not have an option for the waiver. We sent the information to those individuals by email, certified letter, and this article. Second, the 10/10 match will continue to follow the current policy which ends the match at five years – it will not be extended.

So, how does the DROP work once the five years is up and you move into years six and seven within PSPRS? At the beginning of year six, PSPRS will move the retirement monies into a different account established for the individual. Unfortunately, those accounts will not be setup until January of 2023. The

monies deposited into the new account **will not** earn the guaranteed assumed earnings rate as set by PSPRS. Monies in the new accounts will earn a return on investment at whatever the market rate is at the time, and will fluctuate with the market.

After July 7, 2022, those who are eligible for the DROP, but do not meet the new requirements will be placed into the five-year plan. Per the new law, no one other than those actively in the DROP prior to July 7, 2022 will be eligible for a waiver from their agency or PSPRS.

Now that our Board has approved the waivers and requests to extend are already rolling in, what is the impact to our Agency moving forward? We had two individuals that had been offered promotions to fill spots that were due to open August 1<sup>st</sup>. While we have not officially sent out an AD rescinding the promotions, those two individuals will not be promoted right now. We will send something official after the Labor/Management meeting on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. That said, we will have additional positions open between now and November, so the two individuals involved will be promoted this year. We also project at least one additional engineer opening prior to the end of the year, so there may be at least one more promotion to engineer.

We are not currently postponing our testing processes as we do not know at this point how those opting to stay will impact our timelines. Opting for the waiver does not mean the individual has to stay the full two years beyond their five-year DROP. So, could we be required to push back promotional testing? Possibly, maybe – we don't know yet... It truly depends on what people actually do over the next few years.

Offering the extension does bring into question whether or not our current succession plan remains, or if it gets pushed back. For those that need to seek education in order to be eligible to promote, I would recommend starting now, if you have not already. Who knows, you may have more time than you thought to prepare.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that there is likely a group that is happy with the decision to extend, and a group that is not happy with the decision to extend. Unfortunately, this was a no-win decision for Staff, Union officials, and the Board. Whether the answer was yes or no, someone was going to be unhappy.

If you have questions regarding the changes to the DROP, the waiver approval, or the impact, please reach out to your Union reps, or get a message through your chain of command up to whichever level can provide answers. Battalion Chiefs will get a complete briefing in the coming weeks. Ultimately, we want you to have accurate information so I don't have to make another podcast about rumors 😊

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